OIC agrees Misuari to be returned to RP

STORY BELOW, COLUMN 2

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2001 ★★ 80 PAGES 7 SECTIONS VOL.17 NO. 13 ₱15

Tips on how to party

IT'S PARTY TIME!

PARIS—What drink should you offer guests to get a New Year's party swinging? How do you stimulate Christmas dinner talk among complete strangers?

To these vexing questions, science has a solution, the British

TIPS/ A19

'God's message' guides GMA on coco levy use

BY DONA PAZZIBUGAN, CLARISSA S. BATINO AND GERALD G. LACUARTA

A "MESSAGE from God" prompted President Macapagal-Arroyo to order the use of part of the coco levy funds to prop up copra prices.

The President disclosed the message yesterday in a press conference at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas where she gave her year-end economic report.

She noted that the Supreme Court released its decision upholding the government's voting rights in the United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB) on Friday, the same day San Miguel Corp. announced the entry of Japanese brewer Kirin Co. Ltd.

"The fact that they happened at the same time means that God is giving me a message," Ms Macapagal said.

"And I have prayed about it and discerned about it. And I think I know what the message is," she said.

The President said she wanted the coco levy funds released to help the coconut farmers.

"The soonest way we can use the money,

GOD'S/ A20

STUMBLING block—old fashioned politicking—to a robust economy worries and challenges President Macapagal as she makes her year-end economic report to the nation at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. EDWIN BACASMAS

Red wine proven to protect heart

PARIS—The popular belief that a glass of red wine protects the heart has finally been validated in the laboratory.

Health researchers have long puzzled over the so-called French Paradox: the odd fact that the French eat the same amount of dietary fat as in Britain but suffer a far lower rate of coronary heart disease.

The reason, suggest Queen Mary University

RED/ A19

Camacho out; Roxas to review SMC-Kirin deal

BY DONA PAZZIBUGAN, GIL CABACUNGAN JR. AND CLARISSA BATINO

TRADE Secretary Manuel Roxas II looked incredulous, and Finance Secretary Jose Camacho flushed.

But President Macapagal-Arroyo was smiling when she announced yesterday that Roxas would take over from Camacho the review of the $540-million buy-in of Kirin Co. Ltd. into San Miguel Corp.

Camacho said he had asked the President to relieve him of the responsibility as his being a former investment banker, who tried to broker a deal between Kirin and SMC during the past two administrations, would be interpreted as a conflict of interest.

Roxas later told reporters he did not see the President's announcement coming.

Ms Macapagal sprung her surprise on her two fortyish economic managers during a press conference that followed her year-end economic report at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

On Monday, she tasked Camacho with evaluating the impact of the SMC-Kirin deal on the

CAMACHO/ A20

GMA: Good times ahead

ALL'S WELL: Due to the intense grilling by Sen. Sergio Osmeña, the confirmation hearings for Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes had started badly but he's confirmed Thursday and his inquisitor is around to cheer him on. *(Story on Page A6)* ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Economy resilient amid global slowdown

BY DONA PAZZIBUGAN AND CLARISSA S. BATINO

FIVE days before Christmas, the President and her economic managers did a Christmas thing: They counted their blessings. The sum total of their computation: "respectable economic growth in the midst of a (slowing) global economy."

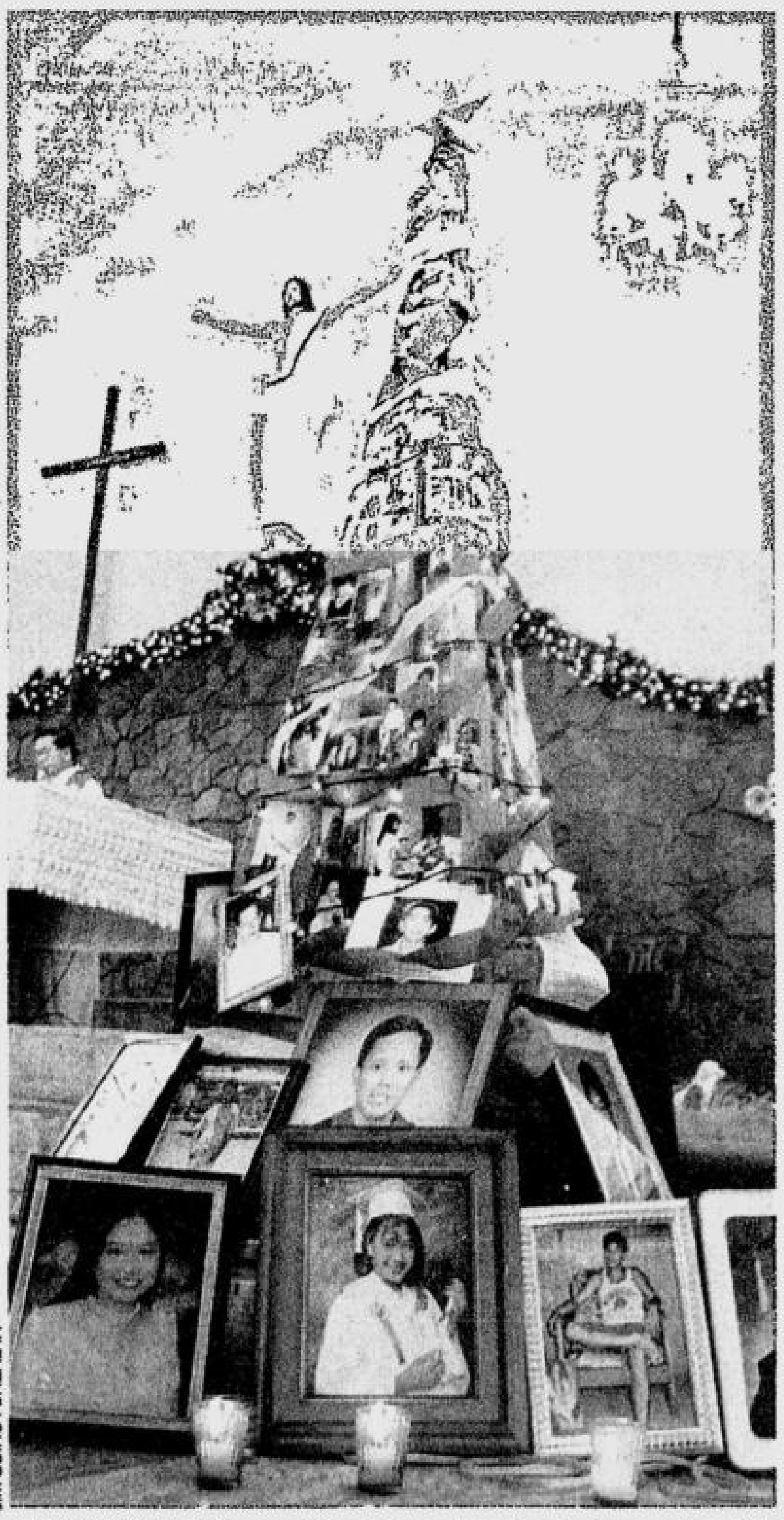
"Our country is back on the track of sustainable development," President Macapagal-Arroyo said at a year-end briefing yesterday held at the Bangko Sentral office. She said she had reversed the nation's fortunes since taking office 11 months ago.

"We are putting our money on a 3.3-percent GDP growth," said Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas. Growth in the gross domestic product at that rate would make the Philippines one of the region's most resilient economies amid the global slump.

"The key objective during the transition to the Macapagal administration was to put the boat back in shape and I think we (have) done that, we have stabilized the forces that used to be unstable," said Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho.

In her year-end report, the President said the government was able to meet its 2001 targets, including lower inflation, lower unemploy-

GMA/ A18



JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

GRIEVING TREE: Pictures of the victims of unsolved crimes make up the Christmas tree of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption.

Sulu Sultan to GMA: Stop attacks

BY NORALYN MUSTAFA
PDI Mindanao Bureau

JOLO—The sultan of Sulu has asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to order a halt to military operations against the Abu Sayyaf and armed followers of Nur Misuari in the Moro National Liberation Front.

In a letter to the President, Sultan Esmail Kiram II said civilians had been badly affected by the pursuit operations launched after the Nov. 19 attacks on military and police detachments "by rebels said to be MNLF or Abu Sayyaf or both," and might "suffer more."

He said that given the government's ceasefire declaration with respect to the New People's Army, a ceasefire should also be ordered in the province of Sulu "to avoid waste of lives, destruction of property and human sufferings, and to give way to peaceful, meaningful and traditional negotiations."

The sultan said he was also try-

SULU/ A18

OIC agrees Misuari to be returned to RP

BY CARLITO PABLO AND JULIET L. JAVELLANA

EX-GOVERNOR Nur Misuari of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao who rebelled against the government last month will be repatriated by Malaysia to the country in early January, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said last night.

Golez made the confirmation after a dinner hosted by President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang for the foreign ministers of Indonesia and Malaysia, ending speculations that Misuari might be turned over to a third country.

"We're getting back former Governor Misuari early January," Golez said.

The communique recognized the legitimacy of the recent ARMM elections in Parouk Hussin, leader of the MNLF council which ousted

OIC/ A18

Congress limits rent hike to 10% per year

BY JULIET JAVELLANA AND ROCKY NAZARENO

BOTH houses of Congress ratified yesterday the Rental Reform Act of 2002 which would spare 5.5 million Filipinos who are renting their dwellings the additional burden of an unreasonable increase in housing rental during these times of economic hardship.

The bill was ratified in the nick of time as the old rent control law was due to expire on Dec. 31.

Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri, principal author of the House measure, hailed its passage as a victory of and for the people.

"This is the perfect Christmas gift from Congress to 5.5 million Filipinos who are currently renting their dwellings and who are not yet in a position to have their own house," Zubiri said.

The new measure allows a maximum of 10-percent annual increase in rent for residential units leased at P7,500 and below in Metro Manila and P4,000 and below in all other places.

The measure will be effective for the next three years.

Under the bill, the definition of residential units was expanded to include "bed spacers, sari-sari store owners and home-based entrepreneurs living in the units with their families."

It also covers other dwelling places like "boarding houses, dormitories and other rooms offered for rent by their owners."

The measure allows owners to collect an advance rental equivalent to one month's rent and a deposit equivalent to two months' rent.

Zubiri said the measure could be signed into law by President

CONGRESS/ A18

SORRY, BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME!

No bail for ailing Jinggoy

Sandigan beats SC deadline, says it's not convinced by Estrada doc's report

By Volt Contreras

THE SANDIGANBAYAN third division last night denied "for lack of factual basis" the petition of former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada to post bail in the plunder case he faces with his father, deposed President Joseph Estrada.

In an eight-page resolution, the anti-graft court said Estrada failed to submit sufficient evidence that his heart ailment is enough reason for him to be allowed to post bail and to stay at home.

The resolution, in effect, dismissed the assertion of Jinggoy's cardiologist, Dr. Roberto V. Anastacio, that his patient should be released from the stressful environs at the Estradas' detention suite at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City.

Petition for bail

In resolving Estrada's petition for bail last night, the court beat the deadline imposed by the Supreme Court for the Sandiganbayan to rule on the bail petition.

The Sandiganbayan was given until 8:30 a.m. today to resolve the petition.

Much of the resolution cited flaws in Anastacio's medical report to the court, upon which lawyers had anchored Jinggoy's Aug. 13 bail petition, his second pleading of such nature.

"Dr. Anastacio has repeatedly asserted that the accused can go home once his condition has stabilized. However, he has not categorically made any finding that the condition of the accused has stabilized," it said.

The doctor also "failed to demonstrate the correlation between (Jinggoy's) stay in the VMMC and the myocardial infarction (his heart ailment) apart from making a motherhood statement that each time the accused is returned from the Makati Medical Center to the VMMC his condition deteriorates."

Not convinced

The court "is not convinced that his home is the only natural environment for him to avoid future serious medical condition.

"Dr. Anastacio evaded saying so and simply stated that the home is the best place (for Jinggoy)."

Since the court was unconvinced by the doctor's arguments, it no longer deemed necessary to address the "legal questions" raised by state prosecutors in opposing the bail pleading.

The resolution also noted that Anastacio apparently failed to conduct "a thorough surveillance or observation" of Jinggoy's condition in relation to other "risk-factors" in his stay at the VMMC. The doctor, it said, failed to make a "definitive conclusion" that it was Jinggoy's stay at the VMMC which was the cause of his illness.

Jinggoy was rushed from the VMMC to the Makati Medical Center, where he remains under Anastacio's care, for the third time on Dec. 6. The first two instances were from July 11 to 21 and from July 29 to Aug. 1.

Gloria may visit Canada next year

By Carlito Pablo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's proposed visit to Canada early next year will serve as a big push to spur Canadian investments in the country as the government continues to address peace and order and security problems.

Visiting Canadian Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific Dr. Rey Pagtakhan made this statement after his meeting yesterday with President Macapagal in Malacañang.

"It is my confidence that the visit of the President to Canada which I hope will take place early next year will attend to that point of presenting the Philippines to Canadian investors," Pagtakhan said.

Pagtakhan, who hails from Cavite and finished medicine from the University of the Philippines, migrated to Canada in 1968 and was granted Canadian citizenship in 1974.

Pagtakhan was first elected to the House of Commons in 1988 and is now in his fourth term. He was sworn in as Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific on Jan. 9.

Nat'l budget deadlocked at 'bicam'

By Juliet L. Javellana

THE BICAMERAL conference committee hammering out the differences between the Senate and the House in next year's national budget is still deadlocked over the final shape the outlay will take.

What has been agreed upon by leaders of both chambers, Speaker Jose de Venecia said yesterday, is that the budget—the General Appropriations Act of 2002—must be passed by noon of Dec. 24.

De Venecia said the deadline was agreed upon in a meeting yesterday among himself, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Senate minority leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Senate finance committee chair John Osmeña, House appropriations committee chair Rep. Rolando Andaya, House majority leader Neptali Gonzales II and House minority leader Carlos Padilla.

De Venecia said President Macapagal-Arroyo had urged members of Congress to pass the budget before Christmas.

"She appealed to us to finalize the budget before Christmas to make it our gift to the Filipino people," De Venecia said.

He said the government is still operating on the re-enacted 2000 national budget because of the failure of the Estrada administration to secure approval of the 2001 budget.

"We should have the budget approved by noon of Dec. 24, so the President could sign it into law on Dec. 28 or 29, after she prepares her veto message," De Venecia said.

De Venecia said he is "sure the President will veto certain items in the budget." He did not elaborate.

The bicameral conference committee met Wednesday afternoon at the Philippine Coconut Authority but failed to reconcile their differences in the bill. .

Instead, the committee created a smaller panel that was still meeting at press time last night.

House majority leader Gonzales said the earliest the bicameral report on the budget could come out is Saturday morning.

This would entail extending the committee's session, he said, as Congress is scheduled to go on a two-week Christmas break beginning today.

De Venecia said the Senate, through Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, has been insisting on adding an appropriation for 20,000 para-military units and 4,000 additional enlisted personnel in the budget.

He said the additional appropriation would result in a bigger budget deficit and "excessive militarization," but the House would agree to this provided the requested numbers were reduced.

TRO vs ARMM execs extended

COTABATO CITY—A local judge here extended his earlier order barring newly elected Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Gov. Parouk Hussin from assuming post.

Regional Trial Court Branch 15 Judge Ismael Bagundang yesterday decided to extend for 20 days the temporary restraining order (TRO) sought by acting Gov. Alvarez Isnaji on Dec. 14.

In convincing the court to issue the TRO, Isnaji claimed that Hussin and other ARMM officials who won in the Nov. 26 polls can only assume on Sept. 30, 2002.

Isnaji cited some provisions of RA 9054, which states that elected ARMM officials should assume on Sept. 30 following the date of their election.

The regional polls were held on Nov. 26 or more than a month after the date of assumption provided under by RA 9054.

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Alvarez seeks relief for airlines

By N. Bordadora

THE DEPARTMENT of Transportation and Communication has asked members of Congress to look into the possibility of granting economic relief packages to the country's airline industry to cushion the impact of the drastic drop in passenger traffic.

Transportation Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez said the DOTC is likely to recommend the granting of rebates in landing and take-off fees and hangar payments as well as discounts in the rental of airport facilities.

"We can also look for ways to reduce the taxes that local airline companies have to pay," Alvarez said.

"We may not be economically well-off but government can still seek ways, other than monetary loans and dole-outs, to bail out our local aviation industry from the effects of the terrorist attacks," Alvarez said in a statement.

Alvarez said the DOTC wanted to come up with the economic relief plans for the local airlines in time for their inclusion in the 2002 budget "but some of the proposals are still to be fine tuned or refined."

"There is a need to socialize the economic relief so that government would not be too much in a disadvantage. Small stakeholders in the industry might be granted a bigger relief than the frontrunners," he added.

Alvarez said the incentives package is also needed to help the local aviation companies to comply with the recommendations of the International Civil Aviation Organization with regard to safety and security.

"Local airlines to be competitive have to adopt new security measures aimed at preventing terrorist attacks similar to the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States," Alvarez said.

These include the installation of close-circuit television for the airline personnel to monitor the movements of passengers in the cabin and reinforced cockpits to keep pilots away from hijackers.

"If we do not install these new passenger and crew security measures, international passengers would keep away from flying the country's airlines," Alvarez said.

Airline supports Alvarez

ASIAN Spirit, the country's only airline company owned and operated by a cooperative of its employees, has asked the Commission on Appointments to confirm the appointment of Transportation Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez.

Archibald Po, director of Asian Spirit, said Alvarez's confirmation would be a big boost to the plight of small players in the aviation industry such as that of their domestic operations.

"Secretary Alvarez has constituted a committee to look into ways and means of helping reduce the operating costs of small carriers like Asian Spirit," Po said in a statement sent to aviation industry reporters.

Po said Alvarez was in favor of reduced landing fees, hangar leases and other similar economic relief for small industry players.

"These initiatives motivates small industry players to expand their operations and link up more neglected areas to the mainstream of commerce and tourism to spur growth and development," Po added.

The airline executive added that the policy agenda of the DOTC under Alvarez could result in a more level playing field and healthy competition among industry players.

"The secretary demonstrated a deep understanding of the challenges facing the transport industry and had initiated the needed policies and programs," Po said. *Norman Bordadora*

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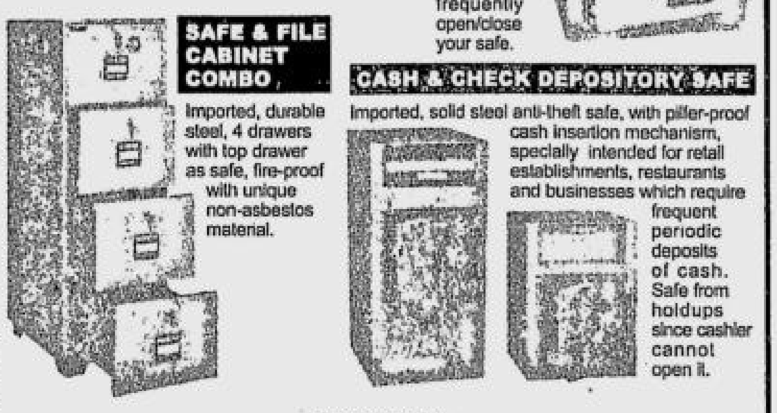

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Muslims accept Mercury apology over calendars

DAVAO CITY—Filipino Muslims have welcomed the apology issued by Mercury Drug Corp. over a "blasphemous" calendar the company is giving away, although others insist it should be addressed to every Muslim and not only to individuals or institutions.

Datu Zamzamin Ampatuan, former executive director of the Office on Muslim Affairs, said he was appeased by the apology but that he only hoped that the drug company was serious.

"It is easy for us human beings to forgive those who have committed mistakes. Allah would also consider their apology if they were sincere," Ampatuan, now director of the Southern Philippines Development Authority here told the INQUIRER.

Even the Moro Islamic Liberation Front said it has forgiven the drug company.

"We hope that they would not commit the same mistake," Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson said.

Mercury Drug earned the ire of Muslims when a photo of a mosque on the cover of its 2002 coupon calendar was captioned as: "Muslim Mosque: Islam Church where they worship Mohammed."

On Wednesday, the BPCA echoed the rage among Muslims when it demanded that Mercury Drug recall the calendar where the "blasphemous caption" was printed.

BPCA serves as one of the sounding boards for issues affecting Muslims in the Southern Philippines.

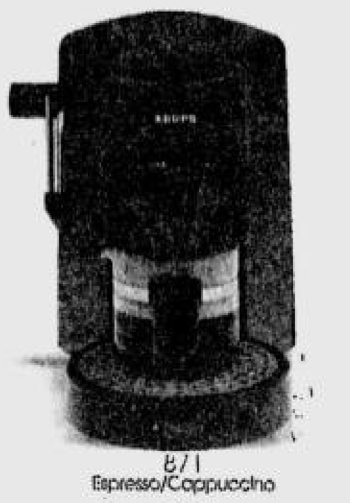
Prof. Abhoud Syed Lingga, chair of the BPCA said the caption did not only insult the Bangsamoro but the Muslim world as a whole.

"Muslims do not worship Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and to say that Muslims worship him is blasphemous," Lingga, also executive director of the Bangsamoro Islamic Institute said.

Islam is a monotheistic religion and Muslims, in declaring their faith state that "There is no god worthy to be worshipped but Allah (God), and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

"What Mercury Drug attacked is the foundation of faith in Islam and the effect of this in people's understanding of Islam is incalculable. The effect also to Muslims is unimaginable (because) they are depicted as worshippers of a human being," Lingga said.

Allan A. Nawal, PDI Mindanao Bureau



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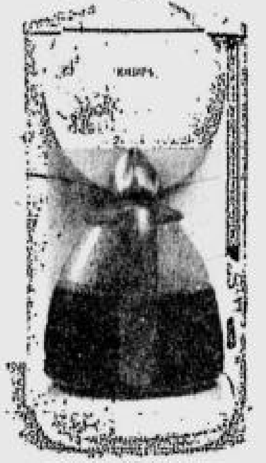

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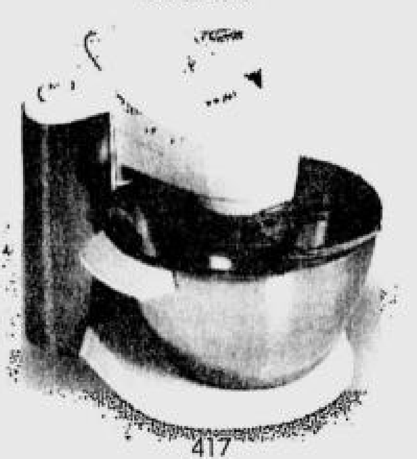

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Garbage crisis over–Gloria

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said the garbage crisis in Metro Manila had been solved.

She said the National Economic Development Authority had already awarded a contract to the firm Pro-Environment.

A few months ago the President said the huge piles uncollected trash all over Metro Manila had become a "national crisis."

She ordered local government officials to find new dumping sites for the garbage, particularly the mountain of trash left at Pier 18 of Manila's Port Area.

"I said we would solve the problem come Christmas time and it has been solved in terms of the long-term solution," she said in the year-end report she delivered at Bangko Sentral yesterday .

"But even in terms of the short-term solution, please let me know where you still see piles and piles of garbage in Metro Manila," she added.

Local governments in Metro Manila had run out of proper dumping sites after the closure of the landfills in Carmona, Laguna and San Mateo, Rizal.

Malacañang had proposed constructing a new landfill in Bataan.

But it dropped the plan after Bataan residents strongly opposed it.

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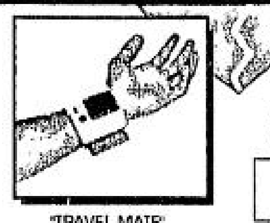

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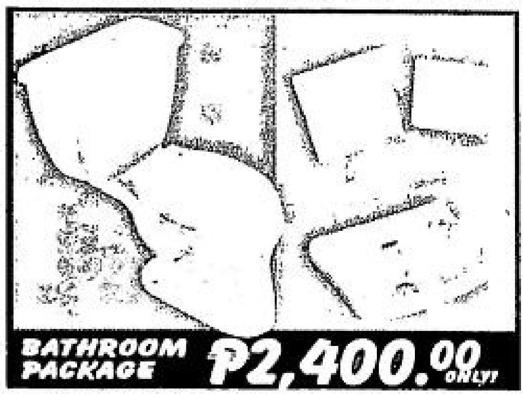

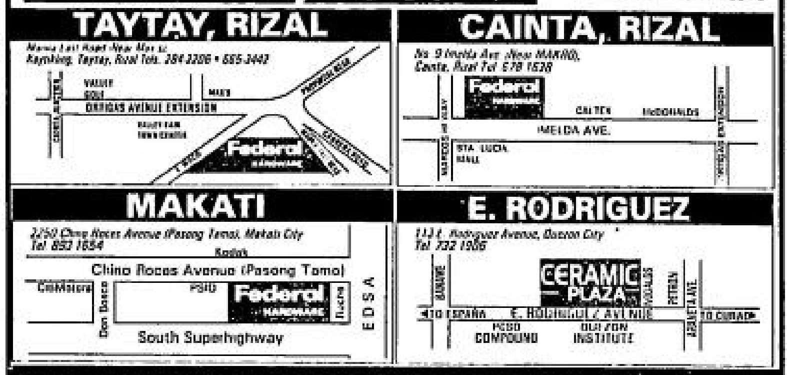

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Desierto lashes back at accusers

DESIERTO in a call on Jaime Cardinal Sin at the archbishop's residence.

By Michael Lim Ubac
Christine O. Avendaño.
and Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OMBUDSMAN Aniano Desierto broke his silence yesterday and lashed back at his accusers—lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr. and Rep. Oscar Moreno—for saying he had connived with members of the House justice committee to vote down the impeachment complaint against him.

"Why can't they accept the fact that they lost the vote? They can't accept that their complaint was very weak, was based on pure hearsay and relied only on evidence that was inadmissible in court or any other legal proceeding," Desierto said of Moreno and Francisco.

Desierto said "no crime was committed since Francisco did not have personal knowledge of it. He relied on the testimony of his former client, Luke Roxas, who disowned him and even called him a liar."

Desierto had been accused by Francisco of taking a bribe from Roxas to waylay an investigation into the latter's bank.

The justice committee, after refusing to hear additional evidence from Francisco, voted 35 to 5 that the impeachment complaint was insufficient in substance.

The hearing had its moments when observers noted committee members winking at each other and Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarito P. Gervacio.

"What's wrong with congressmen winking at each other?" Desierto countered yesterday. "They did this after, not before, casting their votes and (it was done) in the manner of Moreno embracing Francisco when he filed the complaint," Desierto said.

Desierto said the 35 solons who voted in his favor represented different political parties—Lakas, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, the Liberal Party and the opposition.

He said four of them were prosecutors in the aborted impeachment trial of deposed President Joseph Estrada—Representatives Raul Gonzalez (Iloilo), Oscar Rodriguez (Pampanga), Salacnib Baterina (Ilocos Sur) and Antonio Eduardo Nachura (Western Samar). Nachura, he said, is the dean of the San Sebastian College of Law.

Rodriguez, committee vice chair, said the ongoing plunder trial against Estrada was one of four reasons the committee voted to dismiss the complaint.

Without the added burden of having to prepare for his impeachment trial, Desierto could now concentrate on the prosecution of Estrada, Rodriguez said.

He said the "three other good reasons" the complaint was rejected were the insufficiency of the evidence submitted by Francisco; the presentation of more evidence at this point was not allowed by revised impeachment rules, and allowing the complaint to proceed without sufficient proof would violate the rules and be "precedent setting."

Also yesterday, Speaker Jose de Venecia denied he had a hand in the justice committee vote against the impeachment complaint, as alleged by Moreno.

"I have been very careful to stay neutral," De Venecia told reporters.

Moreno said Wednesday De Venecia showed "unwarranted interest" in Desierto's case when the speaker deputized Isabela Rep. Rodolfo Albano to represent him in the panel.

De Venecia said his deputization of Albano to the justice committee was one of 40 deputizations he made in the last four months upon the request of House members.

He said he didn't know Albano would choose to vote in the proceedings or how he would vote.

For his part, Moreno told the INQUIRER yesterday he accepted De Venecia's explanation, "but I hope he would be more careful next time because the acts of his representative might be construed as his own."

De Venecia, however, can expect a letter from Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales detailing calls allegedly made by Desierto to certain congressmen seeking their support in the impeachment case against him.

Rosales said that prior to the Dec. 18 justice committee hearing on Francisco's complaint, Desierto had called up several congressmen, including herself, and appealed for their support.

APPOINTMENT GAUNTLET

Reyes, Canlas, Villanueva confirmed

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE COMMISSION on Appointments finally confirmed the appointments of Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Armed Forces Chief Gen. Diomedio Villanueva and National Economic and Development Authority Director General Dante Canlas in an extended plenary session yesterday.

The confirmation of the three government officials were approved without any objections from commission members.

In endorsing the appointment of Reyes, the sub-committee on national defense chair Jurdin Romualdo said the defense secretary was able to prove his fitness to continue to hold this sensitive post in government.

He said that his endorsement speech was not an endorsement of the personality of Reyes but of his competence and brilliance in handling the top defense post.

Sen. Ramon Magsaysay, who seconded Romualdo's motion to confirm, urged Reyes to do work doubly hard to solve national security problems so that he will be well loved by the people.

Hours before the plenary voting, the sub-committee continued the questioning of Sen. Sergio Osmeña III who voted against the endorsement of Reyes' confirmation.

Lockheed contract

Osmeña grilled Reyes on the $41-million Lockheed contract for the purchase of four C-130 K series as well as surveillance equipment which was signed by Reyes when he was still AFP chief.

Reyes said he was able to satisfactorily answer the queries of Osmeña but was apparently piqued by the senator's earlier statement about the military getting P5 million from the ransom paid by the family of businessman Reghis Romero who was kidnapped by the Abu Sayyaf earlier this year.

Osmeña also said Reyes and Villanueva were in Basilan "micro-managing" the troops at the time Romero was released.

But Reyes told Osmeña that it was not fair for the senator to insinuate that the defense secretary or even the AFP chief pocketed P5 million from the ransom.

He said by making irresponsible statements like this, Osmeña in effect was trying to drive a wedge between the defense secretary and his troops.

Still abroad

Reyes also informed the committee that he was still abroad at the time Romero was released and that he returned to the country and visited Basilan a day after.

Osmeña clarified that he never accused Reyes of sharing the ransom and that his statement referred only to some "unscrupulous officers" in the military.

Osmeña also acknowledged that he indeed erred in saying that Reyes was in Basilan at the time of the release.

Nevertheless, Osmeña said he was still not satisfied with the answers of Reyes and vowed to raise the issues on the contracts and the Lamitan hostage-taking before the Senate committees on defense and national security and the blue ribbon. He did not attend the plenary voting.

Complete soldier

In endorsing the appointment of Villanueva, the majority members said that Villanueva was the epitome of a complete soldier and a humble officer whose lifestyle was simple and austere.

In the case of Canlas, Rep. Bella Angara-Custodio, chair of the subcommittee on tourism and economic development, said the Neda chief was a scholar who emphasized the tax and expenditures policies of the government.

Also confirmed were Ambassador Alejandro del Rosario to Hungary, Ambassador George Reyes to the Argentine Republic, with concurrent jurisdiction over Paraguay, Uruguay and Peru, and Ambassador Rodrigo Aragon to Iran.

Army gets US guns for anti-Abu drive

THE US government yesterday turned over some of its war material to the Philippine Army, saying that some of the equipment should be used in Basilan where an American couple is being held by the Abu Sayyaf group.

"We look forward to the deployment of these trucks in Basilan in the near future," US Embassy charge d'affaires John Caulfield said after the turnover ceremony held at Fort Bonifacio.

The delivery of the equipment, Caulfield said in his brief speech, was only a small portion of their assistance to the Philippines in the "global war against terrorism."

"Our nations have stood together in the past, and we stand together in the new millennium. We are now in a new era of cooperation in the global war against terrorism," Caulfield said.

The delivery yesterday consisted of 25 81mm mortars, 350 M-203 grenade launchers, 24 caliber 7.62 M24 snipers' rifles, five .caliber 50 Barret snipers' rifles and five 1 1/4 ton M715 trucks.

It was part of the $22.1-million US military assistance for 2001.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Jaime de los Santos, after the turn-over ceremony, said an additional 13 more trucks were already in transit.

"These assets will be deployed immediately in Basilan and Jolo so that we can facilitate the release of the American hostages," De los Santos said in his acceptance speech.

"Indeed, we will deliver the results better and faster," he added.

The remarks came on the eve of the 66th founding anniversary of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, which faces several threat groups like the Abu Sayyaf Group in Basilan.

The Abu Sayyaf had been holding American couple Martin and Gracia Burnham as hostages since May 27.

Yesterday, the military reiterated that it would stop any attempt by the Abu Sayyaf to negotiate for ransom.

Paying ransom would only embarrass government, De los Santos explained.

The Army, he added, would be willing to help others in their efforts to free the hostages but only in terms of providing security.

"But if there is money involved, we will stop it. We don't want that to happen," De los Santos said.

Lawyer denies contempt charge

By Christian V. Esguerra

LAWYER Leonardo de Vera of the Equal Justice for All Movement yesterday denied that he somehow preempted the Supreme Court's decision on the constitutionality of the plunder law.

"How can I influence, more so, preempt the decision? I'm just Attorney De Vera," he told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

De Vera said he would immediately issue a response once he has received the Supreme Court's order asking him to explain why he should not be castigated for supposedly preempting its decision on the plunder law.

De Vera said his statements published in the Nov. 19 issue of the INQUIRER "were all statements of fact and could not have preempted, in any way, the decision."

The High Court released its ruling that the plunder law was constitutional on the same day that the article saw print, the lawyer pointed out.

"In the article, I said that the people were getting dangerously passionate (and) emotionally charged as they anticipate that Supreme Court's decision," he said.

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DOJ erred in dropping smuggling case, says Customs exec

By M. Ubac

A CUSTOMS official in Zamboanga City has asked Justice Secretary Hernando Perez to reconsider his decision to dismiss smuggling charges against a suspected former adviser of ousted President Joseph Estrada.

In a 15-page motion for reconsideration filed on Dec. 14, lawyer Lourdes V. Mangaoang, Bureau of Customs District Collector in Zamboanga Port, asked Perez to indict Wee Dee Ping, aka Li Ping Wee.

Mangaoang claimed that the documents submitted by Wee to clear his name were inadmissible as evidence "and, therefore, need not be rebutted or controverted."

Mangaoang filed the motion for reconsideration after the Department of Justice on Nov. 27 cleared Wee, Estrada's presidential adviser for Mindanao economic affairs, of charges that he smuggled into the country 39 drums of chemicals last year.

The DOJ, through State Prosecutor Misael M. Ladaga and Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito R. Zuno, dismissed the charges because of insufficient evidence.

Aside from his Cabinet post, Wee served as a government negotiator during the hostage-taking crisis involving the Abu Sayyaf Group last year.

"With respect to respondent Wee Dee Ping, however, there is no sufficient evidence on record to justify a finding of probable cause against him," said Ladaga. "He submitted to this office numerous commercial documents showing that the respondent Malaysians are the consignees and importers of the seized goods."

But Mangaoang said the DOJ "gravely erred" in dismissing the charges against Wee. She also asked Ladaga to inhibit from further acting on her motion.

Mangaoang said that in support of the DOJ's "erroneous conclusion that there is no sufficient evidence on record to justify a finding of probable cause against respondent Wee, (the DOJ) relied on the numerous commercial documents submitted by Wee that the respondent Malaysians are the consignees and importers of the seized goods."

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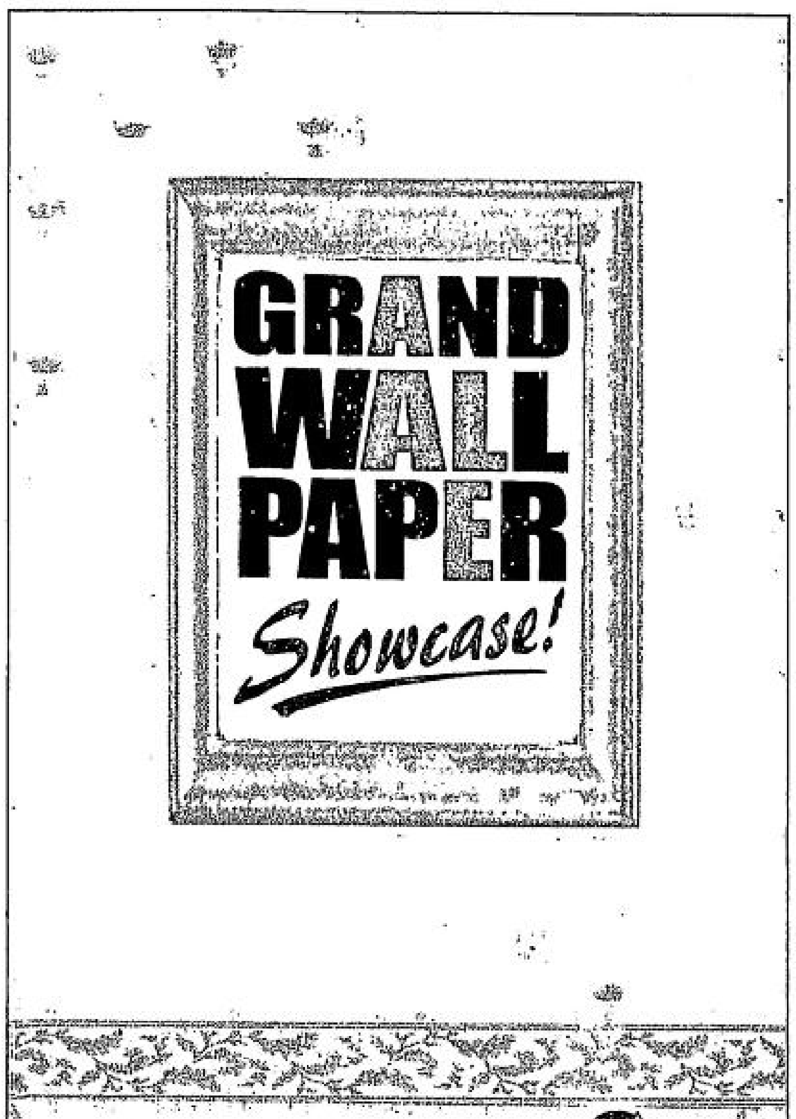
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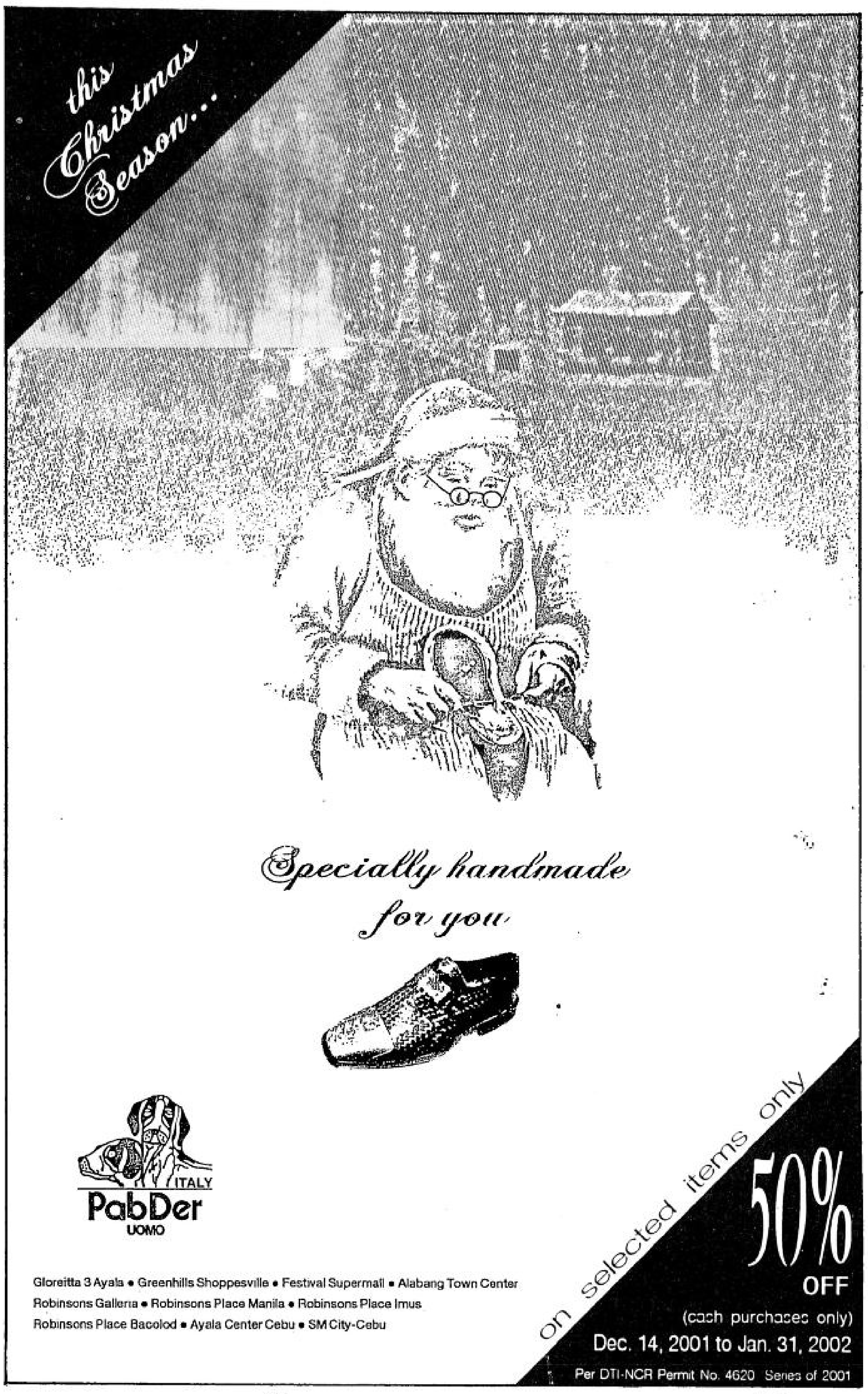
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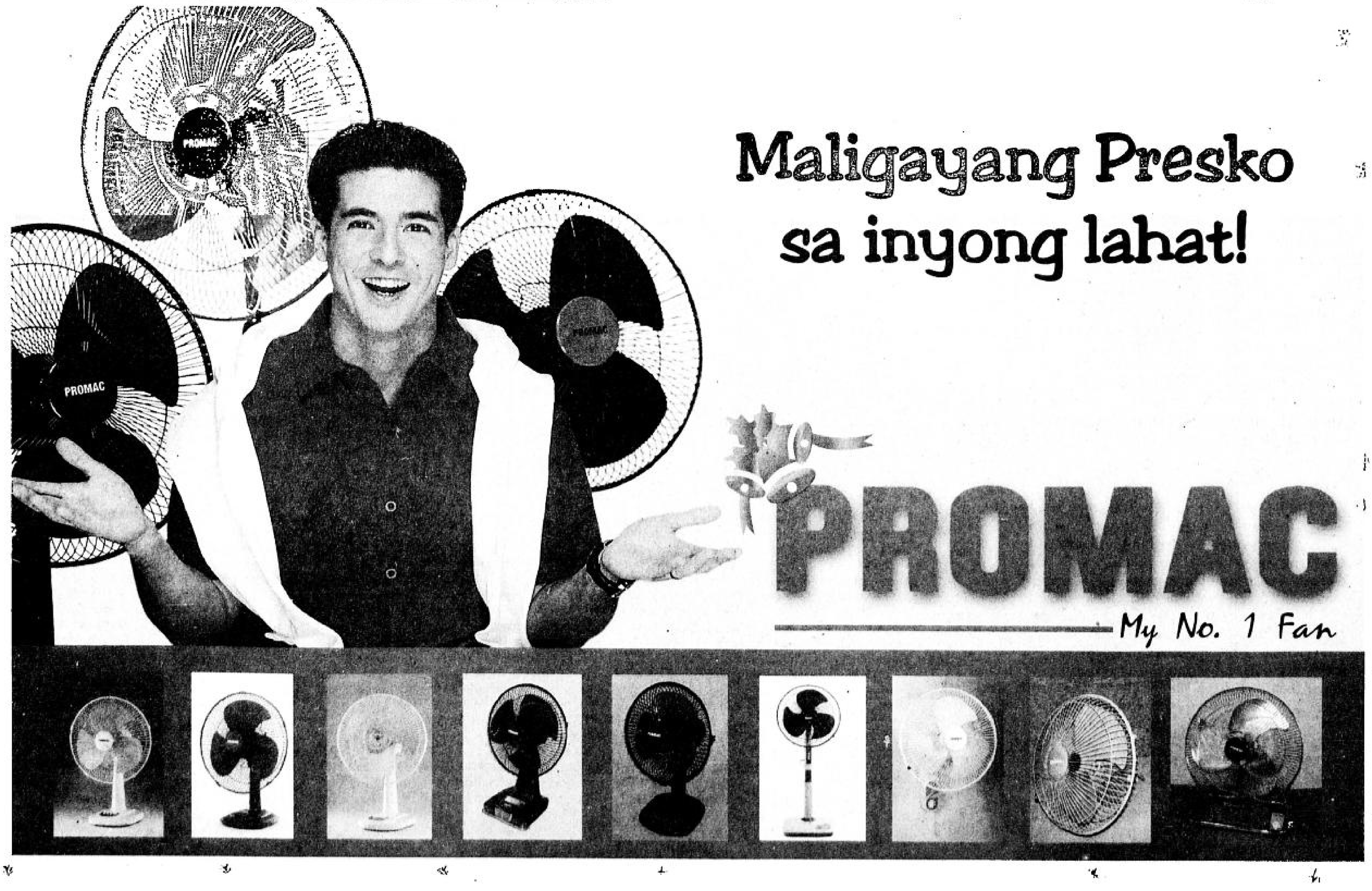
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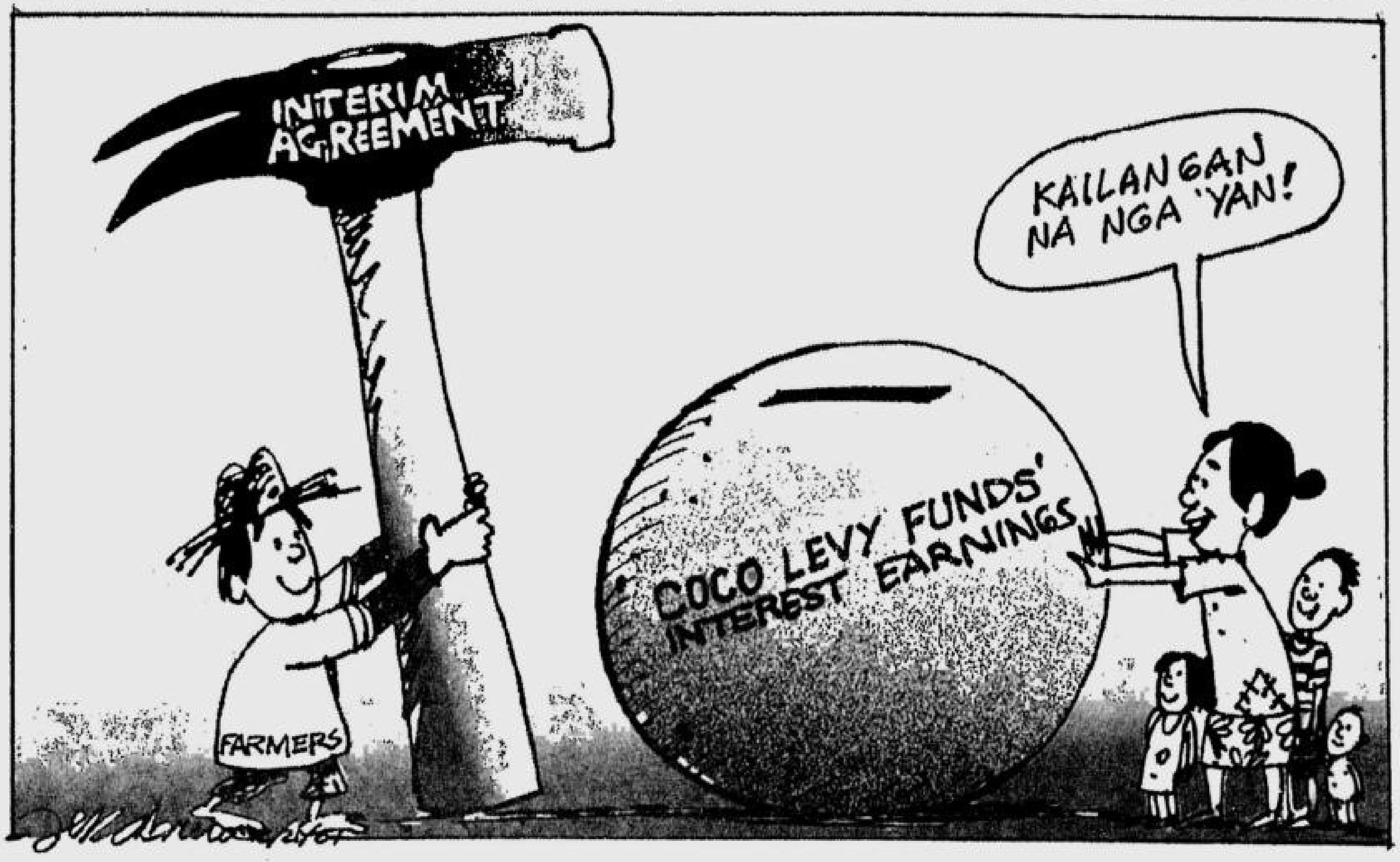

EDITORIALS

Good grades

THE REPORTERS covering the beat had every reason to laugh, at least to themselves if not outwardly. That was in reaction to the claim of the Philippine National Police that it had solved 93 percent of crimes in this country. That was the grade it gave itself some days ago in a press conference. That means, as Director Thompson Lantion explicitly said, that it has solved nine out of every 10 cases that have come its way.

As the reporters themselves kidded each other during the press conference, that means the only crime the police haven't solved yet is the Nida Blanca murder.

It is not all a laughing matter, however. Particularly when you look at the surveys done by the Social Weather Stations and the National Statistics Office showing that most Filipinos believe their quality of life has taken a nosedive, thanks in no small way to crime. And then you hear stories about businessmen, particularly those of Chinese descent or provenance, deciding to pack up and leave as a result of runaway kidnappings. A couple of months ago, the startling statistic was one kidnapping per day. Which did not include those kidnappings that never took place because the potential victims paid ransom in advance. That probably qualifies as extortion, but will not be found in the blotters of the PNP.

The case of Blanca itself suggests how the PNP got the figures it did. We can believe it solves nine out of 10 of its cases. What we cannot believe is that it solves them correctly. Those are two different things. The PNP's rush to solve crimes, a mad rush that involves arresting fall guys, beating them black and blue to wring out confessions and declaring a case shut, is legendary. Not everyone is bold, or crazy, enough to retract a confession like Philip Medel. Most suspects are glad to keep their hides or their lives, if not their freedom, and go along with their captors. That is how most crimes are solved in this country, which only adds to the sum of them.

The PNP itself says it has excelled in solving crimes related to drugs, kidnappings and loose firearms. There, too, we can believe that the PNP solves nine out of 10 cases of that nature. The drug lords, kidnap for ransom gangs and gunrunners are fairly well known to the police. It is just a question of rounding them up every so often for the photo opportunity.

The real problem, as one letter-writer pointed out sometime ago, is what happens to the drugs. The police have no lack of pictures showing the shabu they have managed to recover from drug busts, said the letter-writer, but whatever happens to the shabu afterwards? She herself, said the letter-writer, has seen no pictures of the police destroying the shabu (and other drugs) they have recovered.

Good point, and the same may be said for kidnapping and loose firearms. The reason the Chinese are leaving is that they are not left well enough alone after one kidnapping. They are kidnapped again and again. As to the loose firearms, only heaven knows where they end up. The popular conception is that they end up in "*salvagings*" (summary executions) or in the hands of assets sent to do truly dirty work. The conception did not become popular for nothing.

If we recall right, the PNP also gave itself exceptionally high marks for solving crimes last year. Which only shows that many of its people are in the wrong profession. They would do so much better being stand-up comics.

Bad grades

THE SURVEYS by the SWS and the National Statistics Office, merely confirm what everyone knows all along. Life has gotten harder, and will probably get worse before it gets better.

You can see it in the mood of people this Christmas. And in the sob stories of people like the lantern-makers of Bulacan, Pampanga and Tarlac. It's not just the carols that have disappeared from the Filipino Christmas, the lanterns have, too. For most Filipinos this year, Christmas is cheer, but better beer, or cash.

The only comfort—though often a cold one—you can take from it is that the Filipino has been through worse times and survived. And even then, you wonder if he did so always completely intact, with all his dysfunctional behavior afterwards. But the poor are something to worry about. Last year already saw an explosion of rage from the wretched of the earth, which had all the earmarks of the social volcano blowing its top. You wonder what next year will bring.

There is one bright spot, which is that this country has not lost its sense of humor. It can still afford to laugh even when the PNP says it solves crimes rather than commits them.

Good news for the elderly: Cholesterol has no effect on you

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

HAS anyone noticed that during and after the Christmas season, the blood pressure, cholesterol level and weight of many people go up? It is because of all the rich food served at the Christmas parties and dinner tables. The most miserable are the weight-watchers and the senior citizens who are, because of their age, most at risk for hypertension and heart disease. They have to avoid cholesterol-rich food. Not anymore.

According to a new medical study, persons 70 years old and above don't have to shun cholesterol-laden food. The study showed that "cholesterol levels, which so accurately predict risk of heart disease in middle-aged people, appear to have no such predictive value in the elderly."

This was reported by the New York Times in its "Book of Health," which is a compilation of health stories published by that newspaper. The study originally appeared in The Journal of the American Medical Association.

In the study conducted by Yale University, 997 men and women 70 years old or older were followed for five years. The investigators reported that "although a third of the women and a sixth of the men had high cholesterol levels, these people did not have any more heart attacks during the study period than those whose cholesterol levels were normal or even low, nor were they more likely to die from heart disease or from any cause."

The study is one of very few studies of cholesterol on people over 65. The average age of the participants was 79.

"This is good news for old people," said Dr. Stephen B. Hulley of the University of California, San Francisco. "The study showed that after about the age of 70, they can take it easy and relax" and stop worrying about cholesterol," he said. So you septuagenarians out there, you can enjoy this Christmas season by eating to your heart's content. However, moderation is always a good rule to follow. But the study would maybe console middle-aged people forced to watch their diets not to mind growing old because, when they reach 70, they can eat what they want.

Although the study by itself is unlikely to be definitive, Hulley said, "its findings are bolstered by those of the Framingham Heart Study, now in its 46th year, which also found no effect of cholesterol on the elderly. Another doctor said that the Framigham data in fact showed that "cholesterol levels taken at the age of 50 were a better predictor of heart disease risk at 70 or 80 than the cholesterol levels at 70 or 80."

Dr. Harlan M. Krumholz, the study director at Yale, said that "many old people were alarmed by their cholesterol readings and were trying desperately to get them down, with diet or often with cholesterol-lowering drugs." But since there is no evidence that lowering cholesterol helps in people over 70, doctors should not even take cholesterol measurements in old but otherwise healthy patients," said Krumholz, Hulley and others. What do Filipino cardiologists and the Philippine Heart Association say to that?

The New York Times quoted Hulley's explanation: "At least for people in their late 70s and beyond, we don't know what's a good cholesterol level. We actually don't know whether you're better off with a high one or a low one, so there is no point in measuring it." There was no point in treating old people with cholesterol-lowering drugs, he added, saying he was "deeply concerned because many people in their late 70s and older were taking these medications."

But the question may be asked: "If large amounts of cholesterol in the blood encourage the buildup of artery-clogging plaque in middle-aged people and even in people as old as 65, why would they not do the same in the very old?"

One possible explanation: "Anyone who reaches 80 or so with a high cholesterol level and no evident heart disease may be immune to the cholesterol's effects."

But before you gorge on that lechon, ham, cheese and steak, listen to this: the jury is still out on the Yale study. Doctors differ on what to recommend to the elderly. While there has been a shift toward more aggressive treatment of cholesterol in the elderly, some doctors say that studies have consistently shown that as people grow older, the relationship between cholesterol levels and heart disease risk steadily weakened, the New York Times reported. Eventually, "there is some point where the return is not worth the effort, where benefits are not likely to be seen," said Dr. Basil Rifkind of the US National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. But the problem, he added, is deciding at what point that begins.

Dr. William P. Castelli of the Framingham study said, however, that his data showed that "cholesterol remained a risk factor at any age, for men and women." Dr. Anthony Gotto of the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston said "he still felt that high cholesterol levels in the elderly should be treated because some studies showed that artery-clogging plaque regressed in the elderly when they reduced their cholesterol levels."

"As a matter of fact," he added, "we have seen patients treated with angioplasty and bypass operations when they are in their 80s and when they have severe symptoms. If it's worthwhile treating with invasive therapy, then surely it's worth preventing."

Confusing? It certainly is. So what should you do this Christmas? Stick to your low-cholesterol diet or gorge on the greasy food you miss? The safe answer to that, I think, is to use the golden mean. If you are 70 and over and otherwise healthy, you may take lechon and ham if you are simply dying to taste them. But don't be a glutton. Eat them in moderation today so you will live to eat them again another day. Excess of anything is always bad, but moderation never hurt anybody.

Dreaming of millions

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

SOME weeks ago, someone wrote a letter in the Letters section complaining about a wrong answer in one of the quiz shows. I do not now recall what exactly his beef was, but I recall sympathizing with him completely. I myself heard one such wrong answer in "Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?"

This was a month or so ago. The question was: In what literary work will you find Humpty Dumpty? And the answers were variously, "Mother Goose's Rhymes," "Through the Looking-Glass," and a couple of other items. The contestant, if I remember right, had already gone past the P50,000 mark when this was asked. She picked one of the last two items, and so was wrong. My own answer—from the (cold) comfort of my home—was of course "Mother Goose's Rhymes." I still remember the first couple of lines from childhood: "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall/ Humpty Dumpty had a great fall."

But the correct answer, Christopher de Leon would announce to my complete surprise, was "Through the Looking Glass." I knew something was amiss, and so consulted Grollier's at once. The real answer is that it appears in both, but in "Mother Goose" first. "Mother Goose" was originally a collection of French fairy tales compiled by Charles Perrault in 1697. Some of the stories were later turned into nursery rhymes and translated into English in 1729. Humpty Dumpty was one of them. Humpty Dumpty does appear as well in Lewis Carroll's sequel to "Alice in Wonderland," which is "Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There." But this came much later, in 1872.

Thankfully—for the show but not for knowledge—the contestant did not answer "Mother Goose." If she had, there would have been the devil to pay—if not a million bucks, at least something close to it. It's an object lesson in being a little more careful next time.

All of which is to say that, yes, I'm one of the legions of Filipinos who got hooked on "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" for a while. The plethora of quiz shows, however, has diminished the allure, though I still watch it every now and then while surfing through the channels in early evening. It's a variation of "Trivial Pursuit" and "Jeopardy," which also claimed my attention and loyalty an eternity ago. And quite unlike both, where you get to test only your knowledge, or capacity for trivia—as a friend says, this is in fact not an encouragement to acquiring knowledge but to fragmenting knowledge; but who cares, it's entertaining—here you get to root for a fellow Filipino who has a crack at getting a couple of million bucks. That may not mean much to the people who are fighting for SMC, but it does to the rest of us.

I never went much for "The Weakest Link." It was interesting at first, Edu Manzano was fun to watch with his imaginative put-downs, but it wore out its sheen easily. As it was bound to: It's not that easy to come up with witty abuse all the time, the trick being not just to find the right derogation but to find the right tone—too much could prove unkind and provoke resentfulness rather than self-deprecating laughter. I don't know if it has become as much a monster hit as "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" I do know some of its buzzwords have seeped into current language, which is as sure a sign of its inroads into popular culture as you can find. Words like "the weakest link" and "goodbye," said in particular in Manzano's inimitable—or one should say very imitable, style—have become part of current usage.

What accounts for the overnight success of the quiz show?

Well, crazes do not always offer completely rational explanations as the very word suggest. How explain the universal rage over the Hula-Hoop? But I'm willing to bet in this case, though not all my money, that two things have to do with it.

The first is the pot. That is really the biggest come-on of the shows, though I grant some hosts, like De Leon and Manzano have their bright spots. I don't know if "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" which began this craze, has any precedent in terms of its money. It started with a million but with its (probably) unexpected success zoomed to P2 million in just a few months. That isn't bad for answering questions that are not really all that hard, though you could get zapped by pretty obscure ones somewhere along the road.

I learned about the show, quite incidentally, some months ago when someone I hadn't seen since college called up to say he wanted me as a resource person for his "Call a friend" lifeline. I couldn't understand what in God's name he was talking about until I caught an episode of the show. I was tempted to suggest that not having heard from someone in ages, I might very well say when he called me in his hour of need, "I am not your friend." But the sudden blast of perversity passed. In any case, he never made it past the "fastest fingers" round. Had a case of nerves and blanked out, I understand.

The second factor is, well, we're living in our own version of the Depression Years. These are bad times, and bad times are an open invitation to dreams of fortune. Anything thrown at us amid these swirling waters, we'll grab. Most people I know have rung up one show or another, hoping for a crack at some big money. And yielding a pretty penny in the process—P10 per minute in calls, I understand, which has made Manny Pangilinan a millionaire several times over. That has included a good friend of mine, a writer, who did manage to land in "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?", who got to sit in the hot seat, but who got waylaid in the early going by a question about a Japanese breed of dog. Well, why shouldn't anyone want to go for it? It's honest money, and as the old folks used to say, "*Mahiya ka kung nagnakaw ka* (Be ashamed if you steal)." Infinitely better this than being corrupt.

Those are the strongest links I can think of, though I won't say that's my final answer.

* * *

Comments are welcome at dequiros@vasia.com

Is relief finally at hand?

COMMENTARY

Nono Alfonso, S.J.
Institute on Church and Social Issues

LAST week, while the controversy over the aborted compromise deal on the coco levy funds was still raging, the media played up the conflicting positions of various farmers' groups on the controversy. These groups apparently were divided into two camps: on the one hand, those who figured in the compromise deal led by Efren Villaseñor who is the farmer-representative at the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) and on the other hand, those who opposed the compromise deal led by COIR and the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Magsasaka (Pakisama). At a glance the position of these camps were diametrically opposed to each other. The first would seem to represent pragmatism or expediency, the second, principle and conviction. A closer look however reveals a common desire to resolve the coco levy issue once and for all in order to alleviate the plight of the 3 to 4 million coconut farmers in the country. More importantly, a closer look also reveals the growing desperation and hopelessness among the coconut farmers; some would strike a deal as it were even with the devil rather than suffer the deep blue sea.

In point of fact, before this recently aborted compromise deal, there were already attempts from farmers' groups to dialogue with the Cojuangco and Lobregat groups on the coco levy issue. During President Estrada's time, a multisectoral task force, which included the influential Bishops-Businessmen's Conference (BBC), was created to find ways to resolve the issue. According to Esther Penunia of the AR Now!, farmers groups then participated in the task force because they knew that they were in a position of weakness. And Danding Cojuangco who was a close ally of the former president, had the upperhand. In fact, only months after Estrada's election into office, Cojuangco was back at the leadership structure of the San Miguel Corp. Within Estrada's six-year term, therefore, they knew that they had no choice but to deal with Cojuangco. Nonetheless they stood pat on some non-negotiables which included the recognition that the funds were public and must therefore be audited by the government through the Commission on Audit.

On the other hand, there were also farmers' groups which bought Estrada's campaign promises and propaganda of being pro-poor. They believed that Estrada was sincerely concerned about their interests and that he could prevail upon his friend to strike a deal favorable to the farmers.

At the same time, when the multisectoral task force came into existence, many of these farmers' groups had grown weary waiting for the courts to settle the controversy. The administrations before Estrada's term weren't able to do anything except bring the issue to the courts. There seemed to be no end in sight to these legal battles. The farmers feared that even the courts did not have the political will to decide in favor of the interest of social justice. In the meantime, while the cases gathered dust, the coconut farmer was left to survive on a measly P25 per day earnings. And so, in the context of all this, a compromise deal seemed very attractive.

In the end, however, the attempts to arrive at a compromise deal failed and Estrada's true colors were exposed. When the former president issued EO 313 on the coco levy funds, farmers' groups opposed and rejected the executive order, claiming that it only served the interest of the Cojuangco and Lobregat groups.

Comes now the aborted compromise deal. After Estrada's ouster , Villaseñor's group conducted consultations among farmers to convince them that the only way to settle the coco levy controversy was through a compromise deal. Some groups like the COIR and Pakisama, however, were not convinced especially after their past experience at compromise-making during Estrada's time. They felt that there was no way Cojuangco and Clara Lobregat would concede to their non-negotiables. At the same time, these groups were hopeful that the new administration, which came to power because of a popular clamor for good governance, would finally resolve the issue in favor of the coconut farmers. Villaseñor, however, persisted in his campaign. Reports have it that many farmers were misled into participating in the controversial deal. Some were promised that the deal would result in immediate financial gains. Others were told that it was the only viable alternative. It was either "*negosasyon o rebolusyon.*" Still others, we can surmise, went along willingly out of desperation. Beggars cannot be choosers, as the saying goes. As for Villaseñor, many wonder how he could renege on his principles and say now that the funds were private.

The rest as they say is history. On Oct. 28 the deal was made. Last Friday, it was made moot and academic by the Supreme Court decision that declared the funds to be public. And yet while the Supreme Court's decision may have said the last word on the compromise deal, still, the latter and perhaps the others made before this one remain significant and informative. All these attempts to strike a compromise deal with the "enemy" reveal the growing desperation among the farmers, a desperation that has made them vulnerable to machinations and manipulations by groups that promise them relief from their misery. While the Supreme Court's decision does come as a welcome Christmas gift, the farmers know that their wait is not yet over. The Sandiganbayan still has to act on the cases before it within the six-month limit imposed by the Supreme Court. Once the Sandiganbayan has decided on the cases, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo must come up with an efficient way to distribute the funds. There is still a lot of waiting to be done. Like old Simeon in the Gospel readings this Christmas season, they wait for salvation and hope that it comes before they die.

What do they want?

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

I DON'T know what it is that seems to set off people these days. But the level of stridency and incivility between protesters and their targets seems to be rising beyond reason. Of course, you can't expect unionists or protesting workers to behave like they're at a garden party. But isn't the point of speaking up to be listened to? Then how can you expect the person at the receiving end of your fulmination to heed you if he or she can't even hear you?

Recently, the Department of Labor and Employment approved the release of something like a P2,000 Christmas bonus for rank-and-file employees and a bigger amount for those in management. A radio reporter interviewed DOLE employees, and from their shrill, bitter denunciations, I wondered if I'd heard wrong and it turned out Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas had not approved the release of the bonus after all.

True, given the hard times we all face, P2,000 would not last beyond 30 minutes at the nearest *tiangge*, not to mention a trek through a mall. And it could, at best, provide just a modest repast for the *noche buena*. Still, it seems better than nothing, and given that the government is battling a deficit, one would think civil servants would be grateful for any savings that allow their department to grant them a Christmas cash gift.

Funny, but amid the loud protests and insults, I didn't hear anyone saying they were so insulted by the bonus that they would rather have no share of it, thank you.

* * *

STO. Tomas was at the receiving end of brickbats once more, but this time in Hong Kong, where she precisely went to lobby with the local authorities to reconsider their decision to slash the minimum wage for domestic workers.

If you will recall, organizations of Filipina domestics had taken to the streets of the territory to protest the unilateral order, and demanding, among other things, that the Philippine government make representations on their behalf. Well, that's why Sto. Tomas was in Hong Kong, to talk to officials and convince them that it's in their and their people's best interest to keep the domestics satisfied with their lot. After all, it's domestic help that has allowed Hong Kong couples to work outside the home with full confidence that their children and their homes are being looked after.

At one TV public affairs show, the focus was on a young Filipina mother whose job in Hong Kong was looking after the 90-year-old father of her employer. It can be truly said, then, that Filipinas are the ones keeping order on the domestic side of life in Hong Kong.

Anyway, perhaps as part of her "negotiating strategy," Sto. Tomas was quoted as telling Hong Kong authorities that if the minimum wage is reduced, there was a possibility that the Filipino maids would choose to leave the territory and go home instead.

* * *

FOR THIS statement, which any official, faced with no other bargaining chip but moral suasion and the thousands of women running the homes of Hong Kong, would be constrained to say, Sto. Tomas came under fire from the same activists protesting the pay cuts.

Her statement, they said, was "irresponsible" because the reality was that even if their wages were eroded, the Filipina maids would still stay. So what was the point of protesting the decision of Hong Kong authorities? And why demand the involvement of Philippine officials when their bargaining stances would be undercut by the very same people they are seeking to protect?

And is it entirely fair to declare that "the (Philippine) government has shown no sincerity to create jobs for the people at home"? Say what you will about the failures of the Macapagal administration, but a focus of its efforts has always been from the start the improvement of the economic situation to generate jobs for the many jobless here.

True, if the domestics in Hong Kong do decide to leave en masse, which in all probability they will not, there will be no jobs waiting for them here, or at least the same work that could pay them the same amount of money they're making abroad. And this, President Macapagal was honest enough to tell an overseas worker during a dialogue some months back.

But if they want the government to help them in their disputes with foreign governments, perhaps they should rethink their strategies and be clear first of all who their enemies are.

* * *

TO BE laid to rest tomorrow in his native Angeles is labor leader Cipriano Cortez Malonzo, 89, called "Popsing" by a younger generation of trade unionists.

A stalwart of the Philippine labor movement from the late 1940s, he co-founded the Zamboanga Labor Union, precursor to the National Federation of Labor (NFL) of which he remains honorary president. He also helped found the Philippine Trade Union Congress (PTUC) in the 1970s and the Labor Party of the Philippines in the 1980s.

Of poor origins and a native of Angeles, Pampanga, Malonzo trained as a pastor at the Silliman University in the 1950s but formal theological training was waylaid by a budding commitment to forming unions in Zamboanga City's pier and plantations, along with public prosecutor Roseller Lim. The trade union movement has since remained one of Popsing's two abiding passions, the other being pastoral work and building churches, including the Ecumenical Center Church in Zamboanga City, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines in Davao City and the Church on the Hill, UCCP Compound, in Quezon City.

He is survived by wife Basilia Avelino, and seven children, including former labor leader, now agrarian reform advocate, Ibarra Malonzo, grandchildren and other kin. His remains lie in state at the Church on the Hill, Don Vicente Street, Filinvest II, Batasan Hills. He will be laid to rest tomorrow at the Angeles City Holy Mary Memorial Park.

Christmas expenses

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

EVERY year, toward Christmas, as the temperature drops, our household looks at our own social weather station—the Christmas tree. The way it was decorated and the number of gifts that grew below it made it an effective socioeconomic barometer. There was also a time when Christmas cards were posted on the glass doors in our living room as they came in, but over the years, e-mail and texting has replaced snail mail, leaving us with few Christmas cards to post on the glass. Without these, Christmas becomes dreary.

A few weeks ago a friend dragged me all the way to Alabang to check out a Christmas sale. As we approached the crowded SM mall there, we turned into an *esquinita* and headed for a secluded warehouse which I thought would sell gifts at *bodega* prices. Inside the dark, cold *bodega* was something straight out of my dreams—it was a winter wonderland. Christmas trees, Christmas balls, Christmas trimmings including frosted wax fruits. It was like a set from a movie where deprived and oppressed orphans find themselves in a dream sequence. I am not into interior decoration but walking in that place made me happy for a moment until I saw the price tags. Recreating a Western Christmas was not cheap. I thought that all the items were export overruns and that was where the irony came in. All of these Christmas decorations were imported, not from the commercialized United States but from China. I couldn't stop laughing at the thought that this great communist country may not believe in the spirit of Christmas but it will cash in on the season just the same.

This year our house is decorated with a Christmas tree, Christmas wreaths, sleigh bells and other symbols of Christmas all made in China. But then people are not so concerned with the Christmas tree as they are about the gifts that are found beneath it. In more prosperous times there would be more gifts and lots of gift baskets filled with imported goodies. Today, people are more frugal and our tree reflects the social weather.

A few days ago I also noticed another sign of the times—a pile of white envelopes on our foyer table—all empty, waiting to be filled because they come with crudely written Christmas greetings from the postman, newspaper boy, and bill collectors! Frankly, I wouldn't give a cent to men who bring us junk mail, the wrong newspaper, or disconnection notices but then Christmas is a time of giving. Jose Rizal himself was averse to this forced collection of Christmas cheer. In his 1884 diary he listed down all his expenses down to tips to the barber and train conductor he described as *el aguinaldo maldito* (accursed Christmas presents). This is nothing new. At the end of the 19th century an American living in Manila, Joseph Earle Stevens, wrote:

"Just as surely as the 24th of December comes around, all the office-boys of your friends, who have perhaps brought letters from their counting room to yours, all the chief cooks and bottle-washers of your establishment, all of the policemen on the various beats between your house and the club, and all the bill collectors, who come in every month to wheedle you out of sundry dollars, have the cheek to ask *pourboires* [tips]. Imagine a man coming around to collect a bill, and asking you to fee him for being good enough to bring that document to hand. But this is just what the Manila bill collector does at Christmas-tide. Then all of the native fruit-girls, who each day climb the stairs with baskets of oranges on their heads, come in with little printed blessings and hold out their hands for fifty cents.

"Once out of the office, you go home to find the ice-man, the ash-man, the coachman and the cook all looking for tips, and you are compelled to feel most religiously holy, as you remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Reading Stevens a century later gives one a feeling of déjà vu or again drives home the point that the Philippines and the Filipinos have changed little in the past century—or maybe even the past 1,000 years. Stevens did not have traffic in his time and would not have seen the beggars who descend from the Cordilleras in December. You see less of them these days because it might be more profitable to fleece people along Session Road in Baguio than Edsa. Maybe they have been grafted into the urban landscape after selling their traditional costumes to antique collectors for a price worth more than a handful of change. Maybe they look urban now? It would be harder to hide *balugas* forced into our world by Mt. Pinatubo and poverty.

What about children who knock on car windows singing Christmas carols? They may be cute but there are some underage extortionists who repay Scrooges with loud jeers for being *barat* or *makunat*. Worse, for saving a few pesos the stingy motorist will have to deal with a long scratch on the side of his car. Then it truly becomes better to give than to receive. "*Meri krismas*" is always welcome unless the greeting comes from a traffic policeman who has flagged you down. "*Meri krismas*" sends a different kind of chill down your spine if it is from a customs inspector going through your baggage. Christmas traditions have not changed but the way we perceive and live is different over time and context.

* * *

Comments are welcome at ambeth@admu.edu.ph

Christmases past

HIGH BLOOD

Facundo S. Tallo

WE'D also like to know the concerns of the sixtysomething and above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, content that all's well with their world and with themselves. —**Ed.**

I HAVE been retired some years now and in my early 70s, and therefore, I have had the luxury of time without pressure of any sort to bother me. It's in this state that memories of the past flood my mind.

Memories consist of the beautiful and the ugly but, by conscious choice, I dwell on the first, the beautiful. As a child in the province, my beautiful memories are of Christmas.

There were two occasions during that time in my life when I received something new from my parents. They were on Christmas and my birthday, and so, I looked forward to those two dates with excitement for those new things.

I fondly remember that it was a week before Christmas that my father bought me my first pair of rubber shoes marked Elpo, short for the Spanish words, *el porvenir* (for the future) which, like Ang Tibay, was a local manufacturer of Philippine shoes. The two brands were then the competing tags of the most popular, locally made shoes which are no longer around these days.

Meanwhile, my father, who was a tailor, had already sewn a shirt and short pants to go with my new pair of rubber shoes. To a provincial lad at that time, a great, good feeling ran down my entire being because of those new things.

How I wished to wear right away the new clothes and the pair of rubber shoes but my father counseled that they should be worn on Christmas Day and thereafter. As the word of my father was the law in our house, I could not do otherwise but to wait excitedly for the appropriate time.

As if to follow the family practice, our eldest brother who was working in Manila even before World War II, sent me a pair of leather shoes marked "Broadway" and a toy pistol as my Christmas gifts. That was also my first pair of leather shoes, a combination of white and brown, and I was very happy for it. But not so much with the toy pistol which I had to let my elder brother play with more, because the loud explosions frightened me.

As a tradition, Christmas Day is preceded by the nine-day Dawn Masses called in our place as "Misa sa Kaadlawon," starting on Dec. 16 and ending on the 24th. It was a sung Mass in which the parish priest sang the prayers, gospel and preface, and intoned the "Gloria" and "Credo" all in Latin because that was the language used in Church rites then.

The Dawn Mass was enlivened by the town brass band whose members assembled at a place in the *poblacion* and marched toward the parish church, blaring with marching music as if to awaken the sleepy town for the "Misa de Gallo." Inside the church at the choir loft, the band played the accompaniment of the liturgical songs sung by the crude parish choir like the "Kyrie," "Gloria," "Credo," "Sanctus," "Benedictus" and "Agnus Dei."

After the Mass, a food reception (locally called *painit*) was served those who rendered services during the Mass like the members of the choir, brass band, *sacristans*/altar boys and of course, the parish priest. The food consisted of native delicacies, such as *suman, budbod, biko, bibingka, puto, pansit* and *samwil* with hot brewed coffee and *luya* as beverage prepared by church women assigned for the day during the nine-day Masses.

For the altar boys, like me, it was a great delight to be invited to a food reception in recognition of our services. We were happy to be counted among the elders in the church service, not to mention that we loved to eat.

The Misa de Gallo was capped by the "Misa de Aguinaldo" (Midnight Mass) which was called "*Misa sa Tungang Gabii*" in the vernacular. "*Aguinaldo*" is a Spanish word which means gift so that literally, "Misa de Aguinaldo" can be translated to Mass of the Gift in English.

The Midnight Mass is a celebration of Jesus' birth which, among Christians, is God's greatest gift to mankind. It is, therefore, appropriate to call the Mass as Misa de Aguinaldo.

To underscore the solemnity of the occasion, the priest wore first-class vestments, used incense, sang the prayers, gospel and preface of the Mass and intoned the "Gloria" and "Credo." Using the *turibulum* or censer, he "incensed" the gospel in the missal, customarily crossed his forehead, lips and breast that he might worthily proclaim God's word and kissed it to show his reverence.

Later, the priest "incensed" the bread and wine on the altar, as an offering with the supplication that his prayer might ascend like the smoke of the incense to God on high. At the consecration, the acolyte incensed the bread and wine as the priest-celebrant raised the sacred species, one after the other, for the adoration of the people.

As it has been the sequence, the Midnight Mass is followed by the Christmas Day Mass. The following morning, the parish priest again celebrated a Solemn High Mass during which the choir again sang the lively and joyous "Misa de los Pastores" (Mass of the Shepherds), accompanied by the town brass band.

After the morning Mass, the altar boys garbed in red cassock and white surplice started the "Suroy sa Ninyo" (Visit of the Child).

The *Ninyo* was a tiny statue of the Infant Jesus, which is around six inches long, lying on a tiny bed with a semi-circular canopy attached to its extremities.

The Visit of the Child meant bringing the image of the Infant Jesus to the houses of the parishioners, where, upon reaching the stairs or door, the senior altar boy carrying the image, greeted in Latin: "*Pax domui,*" a syncopation of the complete "*Pax huic domui*" which means "peace to this house," and his retinue responded, "*Et omnibus capitantibus in eo,*" a corruption of the correct response, "*Et omnibus habitantibus in eo,*" meaning "And to all who live in it."

The house inhabitants rendered homage by kissing the image of the Infant Jesus. As one kissed the Holy Child, the senior altar boy intoned again in Latin, "*Pax tecum* (Peace be with you)" and his companions answered, "*Et cum spiritu tuo* (And with your spirit)."

The altar boys, including myself, were happily motivated to join the "*Suroy*" because of the standing invitation for lunch in the house of one of the altar boys who was born on Christmas Day so that he was named Natividad (Nativity). We looked forward, therefore, to the food prepared by the parents of the birthday celebrator.

The "Suroy sa Ninyo" was limited within the boundaries of the *poblacion* on Christmas Day. The following day, the altar boys composed of one senior altar boy who carried the Ninyo, two small-bell ringers, two candle bearers and one holder of the donation plate, would head for Barrio Ichon where they would stay overnight. On the way, we would make a house to house visit from Barrio Rizal, Mohon, San Joaquin, Amparo and finally, to our destination.

Our schedule for the morrow was to go up to Ilihan, Ahag and Sindangan, the *sitios* then of Barrio Ichon. Working men and women left the fields, upon hearing the ringing of the bells, and approached us for the homage to the Divine Child, while children stopped playing and scampered to their houses where, with their parents and siblings, they waited for the coming of the Ninyo.

An evacuee, who stayed in our town during the Japanese occupation, organized young boys into the town's caroling group. He taught us mainly Spanish *villancicos* which we did not understand except the words Belen and *pastores* which mean Bethlehem and shepherds, respectively, in English.

As kids then, what motivated us to join the caroling was the money side of it. Probably, because of the Christmas season, the people were generous in giving us the customary "*hulog*" (cash gift) after our singing and greeting: "*Maayong Pasko!*"

Facundo S. Tallo, 71, is a member of the Philippine Bar.

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Christmas tradition that disturbs

THIS is a purely civil complaint, although I would not be surprised if some quarters choose to paint it as a religious conflict of sorts.

Imagine this: It is midnight or early morning, you are asleep in bed, tired after a whole day at work, trying to get as much rest as you can before another whole day at work dawns, and then, boom! A jeepney parks right in front of your house, its radio blasting away at full volume.

A similar scenario unfolds every year during the Christmas season, particularly during the nine-night stretch of the Misa de Gallo.

I am a Filipino citizen and I am entitled to a full night of quiet sleep, undisturbed by any neighbor or by any neighbor's yapping dog. On a strictly secular level, I have nothing against Catholics celebrating midnight or pre-dawn Masses. They may choose to do so every night of the year and they wouldn't hear a pip from me—so long as they allow me my quiet nights and my peaceful sleep.

Broadcasting the Mass to the entire barangay through a loudspeaker is, I must say, a tyranny, an imposition, an intrusion—unsolicited, unwarranted and most unwelcome.

Please tell me if I am misinformed, but I am unaware of any law, whether human or divine, which compels a law-abiding citizen to suffer in silence as a priest croaks all four (or is it five?) stanzas of "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Or when the same priest drones on with his pathetic homily, oblivious of the fact that there are people who are totally not interested in whatever he imagines he has to preach.

Mass and other such stuff can be aired on television or on radio. This is okay, because this leaves me with the choice to switch to another channel or station, and to switch off the television or the radio altogether.

But if, as in my case, the loudspeaker is almost literally in my face (that is, no more than 25 meters away from my bedroom window), then I am left with no choice other than to ensure as best as I could that the entire sleep-busting routine, from the wake-up bells and carols all the way to the end of the insipid service, cease and desist.

But come to think of it, there is no real need for a civil statute on this issue, as there is already a law on it. This law is called respect, and it is mutually binding. I respect your right to practice your religion, and you ought to respect my right not to listen to, or to be deprived of sleep by any of your religious practices. After all, you would not be too happy if I barge into your bedroom banging drums, making all sorts of racket and totally ignoring your right to sleep in peace in your own home, would you?—**EDWARD G. LIBUNAO, 43-B Inaman St., Masambong, Quezon City**

European, not purely US-style basketball

WITH THE PHILIPPINE Basketball Association all set to implement the "zone defense" next year in preparation for the national basketball team's stint in the 2002 Pusan Asian Games, allow me to share my personal views on how to improve the country's quality of basketball in other future international competitions.

Note that despite being the world's supreme professional basketball league, the National Basketball Association of the United States recently applied amateur rules in anticipation of tougher competition mainly from European countries—but only on a selective basis. We should stop patterning rules after the United States, and instead fully adopt the international amateur system.

We should create and maintain in advance (at least a year) a 24-man training pool to be divided into two 12-man teams for any major international tournament. The first team shall be composed of the 12 best players according to their designated roles and positions, and the second team would make up the reserves.

For import-laden conferences, the PBA as well as the Metropolitan Basketball Association (MBA) should be required to have an import standing at least 6'8" in height. With this, one-on-one plays, especially from the backcourt, would be minimized, with outside shooting given more premium. Moreover, power forwards and centers, which normally post up from the weak side, would develop decent perimeter shooting skills, while their defense prowess would be honed to the fullest if matched against the imports.

Hold exhibition games only against European or ranked US collegiate teams, limiting tune-up games with top Asian teams. It is for this reason that local cagers get to play against taller, heftier and more athletic opponents from the West, without being scouted out by the Chinese, Koreans, Lebanese and the Japanese.

Lastly, televise more often European basketball games on local channels. Perhaps the main reason why many Filipinos play the Western-style basketball is that we have watched too much NBA games on TV. Since no one can probably be like Michael Jordan even in the United States, Filipinos better not emulate him at all, for it is enough that we idolize the world's greatest basketball player or any other NBA player for that matter. The point is, black Americans typify athleticism, gravity-defying moves and showboating—inherent skills that are difficult to match by any native Filipino. On the other hand, Europeans, as well as white Americans, who are better known for their more sound fundamentals, court smarts and excellent outside shooting, should practically be the ones imitated by many height-handicapped Filipinos.—**MICHAEL DANILO F. CUETO JR., 70 Gonzalo Puyat St., Loyola Subdivision, Marikina City**

Thanks and congratulations

I HOPE you would not mind receiving a lousy handwritten note from an old and very sick Jesuit priest. But I simply feel obliged to thank and congratulate you which I now see as the best Metro Manila broadsheet not only in quantity but especially in quality.

For a most recent example, allow me to cite from your issue of Dec. 2, 2001 the editorial on the now celebrated suspension from office of a very distinguished Ateneo alumnus friend, the headline story and pictures on the "coconut levy deal," the enlightening column of the honorable Isagani Cruz on "Pussy-footing" with the Erap case. Balanced news, fearless views, indeed!—**FR. RAY MILLER, S.J., Sacred Heart School, Cebu City**

Then who killed my son?

I FELT surprised and a little shocked when I heard that my son, Capt. Rogelio Eligino, was killed on that fateful Oct. 8, 2001 encounter in Sitio Tuli, Barangay Conversion, Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija.

We belong to a poor family in Poblacion San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. We taught our children to be humble, disciplined and God-fearing individuals. Rogelio was the third child among our five children. His father was only a poultry worker in the Lorenzo Poultry Farm in our place. My husband died when Rogelio was still in high school. Hardship in life was not a hindrance to his ambition to have a stable job in the future. He took the entrance examination for the Philippine Military Academy in 1989, entered the academy in 1990 and graduated in 1994.

I can recall when he was still in the academy that he always sent his savings on his allowance to us. He was always very loving to his brother and three sisters. He told them to study well. After his graduation in the academy in 1994, he was assigned as a platoon leader then finally, company commander of the 541th Battalion stationed in the province of Nueva Vizcaya. He was the battalion operation officer when he volunteered to lead the troops who conducted pursuit operations in the vicinity of Barangay Conversion, Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija on Oct. 8. In that encounter, he met his tragic death.

The death of my son Rogelio was a great loss to our family especially to me, his mother. It has been very difficult for me to accept the untimely and painful death of my son. He was planing to get married this December but because of the incident everything is now lost.

My son died while serving and protecting his fellowmen but I was saddened when I heard from a cause-oriented group that the NPA rebels who were also killed in that encounter were actually mere fishermen or farmers. Some said they were victims of torture or of a massacre. If this accusation is true, then who killed my son? Why is it that not a single member of the so-called human rights group came out to defend my son? Is it because he is a military man and not an NPA? Please give justice to the death of my son who died for the sake of peace and democracy.—**NENITA ELIGINO, Centro San Isidro, Nueva Ecija**

Pollution from bottled water containers

I HAVE observed that bottled water is very popular in many countries including the Philippines nowadays. The New York Times reports that there are more than 700 brands of bottled water produced worldwide. Would you agree with me that bottled water abroad is more expensive than gasoline? I guess the only difference between bottled water and tap water is the container.

The World Wide Fund International (WWFI) points out that bottled water may not be safer or healthier than tap water in Europe and in the United States. In those countries, there are more regulating standards on tap water than those applied to the bottled water industry. In our case, the problem lies in the water distribution pipes where contamination may come in. This could be remedied by boiling.

The use of tap water does not only save money but also protects our fragile environment. Dr. Biksham Gijja, head of the Freshwater Program of the WWFI, says approximately 1.5 million tons of plastics are needed for the production of water bottles each year. The toxic chemicals that are released during their manufacture and later on their disposal, contribute to environmental pollution and climate change.—**ROQUE G. TIBOR JR., Benguet State University, La Trinidad, Benguet**

Globalization's handiwork and effects

THE NATIONAL Socio-Economic Summit last Dec. 10 was a grandiose exercise in evasion. It blamed the current national crisis on everything except its real cause: globalization. It assigned responsibility for the crisis on terrorism, criminality, adversarial politics, graft and corruption, etc. when these are in fact the effects, not its cause.

The sad state of the economy is indisputably globalization's handiwork. Import liberalization has destroyed the domestic economy. The recession in the First World, itself an effect of globalization, has eviscerated the economy's export-oriented sector. Privatization has alienated the country's strategic assets and, at the same time, occasioned unprecedented plunder. Deregulation has disarmed the state as a protector of the people's welfare, rendering the citizenry defenseless vis-à-vis transnational greed: The result: individually and as a nation, Filipinos are now suffering unprecedented poverty, injustice and indignity.

Unless our leaders in Malacañang, Congress, the judiciary and the military decide soonest to rule this country for the benefit of Filipinos rather than for the aggrandizement of transnational corporations, the social volcano's explosion will be sooner than later The first step is to recognize globalization as the problem and to proceed to address it.

A policy of evasion will not work.—**AMADO GAT INCIONG, Inciong and Associates, Unit 301 Union Square Condominium, 145 15th Ave., Cubao, Quezon City**

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Cebu - Downtown Branch Magallanes St. Cebu City	December 24 & 31, 2001
Congressional Avenue Banch Cherry Foodorama Complex Congressional Ave. Quezon City	December 22, 24, 29 & 31, 2001
Corinthian Gardens Branch Corinthian Gardens Subdivision, Quezon City	December 22 & 29, 2001
Dagupan Branch FIB Bldg., M. H. del Pilar Dagupan City	December 24 & 31, 2001
Davao - Monteverde Branch Monteverde Avenue Davao City	December 24 & 31, 2001
Lucena Branch Merchan St. Lucena City	December 24 & 31, 2001
Valenzuela Branch MacArthur Highway Karuhatan, Valenzuela City	December 24 & 31, 2001
Tutuban Branch Tutuban Center Prime Block C. M. Recto Avenue Tondo, Manila	Dec. 22 (9:00am - 4:00pm) 24 (9:00am - 2:00pm) Dec. 29 (9:00am - 4:00pm) 31 (9:00am - 2:00pm)

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The WORLD

LUVERNE B. GUECO, EDITOR

US-led fighters take over Aladdin's cave of terrorism

TORA BORA, Afghanistan—US military planes returned Thursday to the skies over Osama bin Laden's former hideout in eastern Afghanistan as military investigators went through the Aladdin's cave of terrorism below.

Ammunition, guns, surface-to-air missiles and other weapons have been found in the caves hurriedly abandoned by the followers of the suspected planner of the Sept. 11 attacks in New York and Washington.

For the third day in a row a B-52 bomber flew in circles over the Tora Bora mountain where the al-Qaida leader had a network of caves and tunnels now being emptied by US Special Forces and Afghan militia.

At least one fighter-bomber and other observation planes were seen flying over the region on the lookout for the hundreds of fighters who fled two weeks of intense bombing raids.

Most of the mainly Arab and Chechen fighters were believed to have headed for the Pakistan border after the al-Qaida bases became a target.

Local mujahideen fighters, working with US Special Forces, are going through the tunnels, which have been sealed off since the victory over al-Qaida.

Commanders said about 200 bodies have been found. But donkeys have also been seen coming back down the slopes carrying equipment and documents found in the Bin Laden lair.

Access to one of the hundreds of caves was through a one meter (three feet) wide drainage channel. Inside were thousands of white metal boxes packed with munitions.

The entrance was dug through rock and earth, leading to a cavern about four meters (12 feet) wide and two meters (six feet) high.

Stacked from floor to ceiling along the walls were–thousands of metal boxes inscribed with Chinese characters containing munitions, including tons of 12.7 millimeter mortars used for ground-to-air or ground-to-ground attacks.

Another cave further along the slope—between eight and 10 meters (26 and 33 feet) wide—contained a similar array of arsenal.

Other openings are visible in the mountain side. Some of the underground shelters would have required major work to construct. *AFP*

THE YEAR about to end is a dark one for New York, but the city moves on and hopes for better times. Photo shows Kevin Andrle of Landmark Signs adjusting the rigging for the New Year's Eve Ball on top of a flagpole in Times Square in New York on Dec. 18. The ball will hang from the top of the 77-foot pole on top of a 20-story building and be lowered at midnight on New Year's Eve. REUTERS

Global poll: US policies helped trigger terror attacks

PARIS—Opinion-makers strongly support the US-led war on terrorism but oppose spreading the action beyond Afghanistan and feel Washington's policies contributed to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, according to a survey in 24 countries.

The poll of 275 opinion leaders, published in the Paris-based International Herald Tribune Thursday, showed a majority of non-US respondents felt US policies had played a significant role in fueling terrorists' anger against the United States.

The poll findings suggest "that much of the world views the attacks as a symptom of increasingly bitter polarization between haves and have-nots," the paper said.

"The danger for America is that its overwhelming power is feeding resentment, in the same countries that also feel they are missing out on the spoils of economic progress."

While around six out of ten non-Americans believed Washington was doing the right thing in fighting terrorism, that support tumbled when the question of possible US-led attacks on Iraq, Somalia or elsewhere was raised.

While 50 percent of the Americans polled said the military action should be broadened to their regimes supporting terrorism, only 29 percent outside the US agreed.

Asked if many or most people would consider US policies to be "a major cause" of the Sept. 11 attacks, 58 percent of the non-US respondents said they did, compared to just 18 percent of Americans.

The poll, conducted by the paper and the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, highlighted a large gap between the way Americans believe they are seen abroad and the way others say they see the United States.

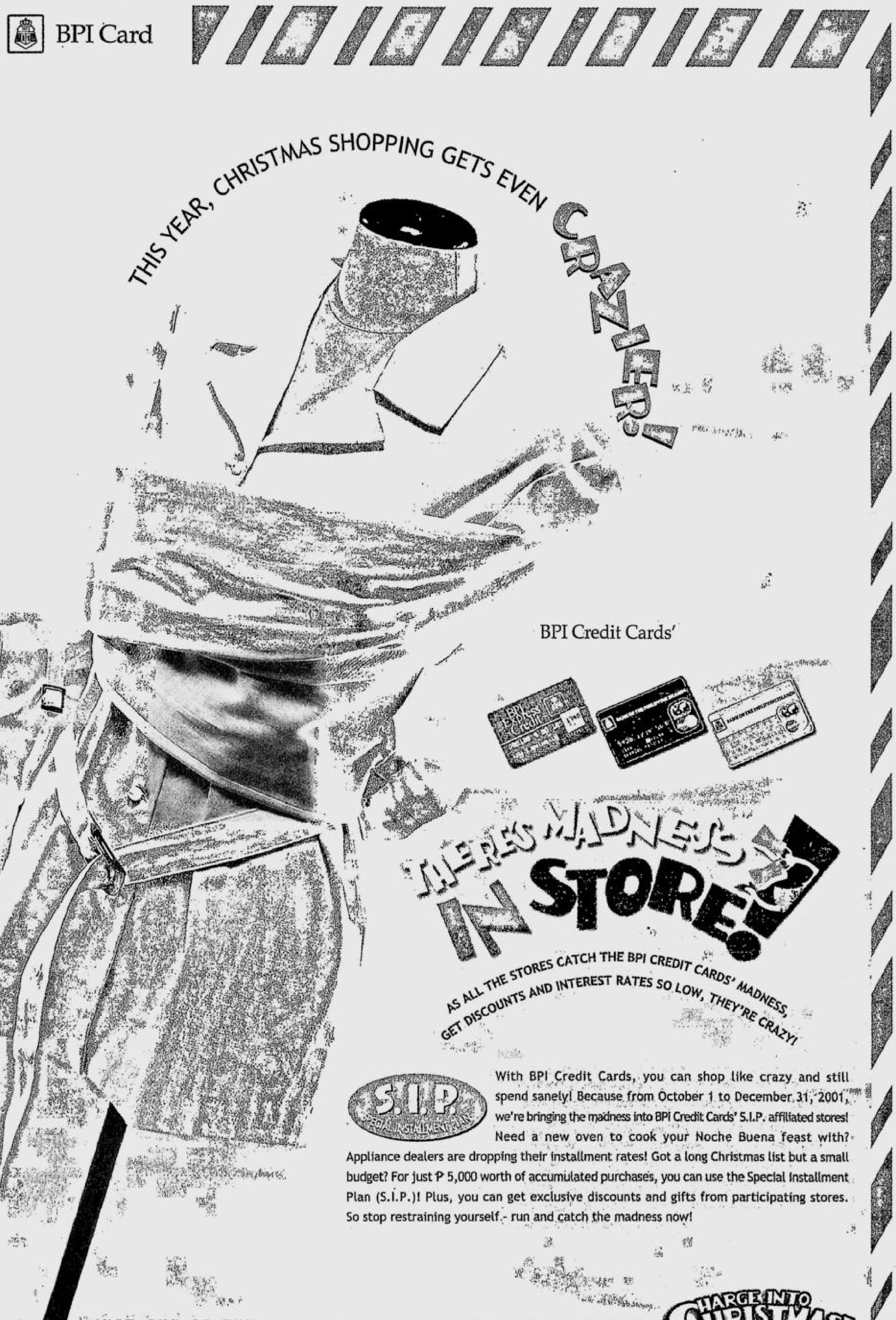
Samuel Wells, associate director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, was quoted as saying Americans were relatively unaware of how many Muslims "were terribly upset at the carry-over from the Gulf War," including the continued US military presence in Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf.

Not one American respondent believed the US attacks on Afghanistan would be widely considered as an overreaction, while over 40 percent of non-Americans, and 63 percent in Islamic countries, did.

Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew center, noted as particularly striking the finding that two-thirds or more of respondents in every region outside the United States said it was "good that Americans now know what it's like to be vulnerable."

A total of 52 percent of respondents said the world's wealthiest country does far too little to help the least-advantaged, citing that as a major cause for dislike of the United States.

The paper said the pollsters had interviewed between Nov. 12 and Dec. 13, "275 influential people" in politics, media, business, culture and government; 40 in the United States and 235 in 23 other countries. *AFP*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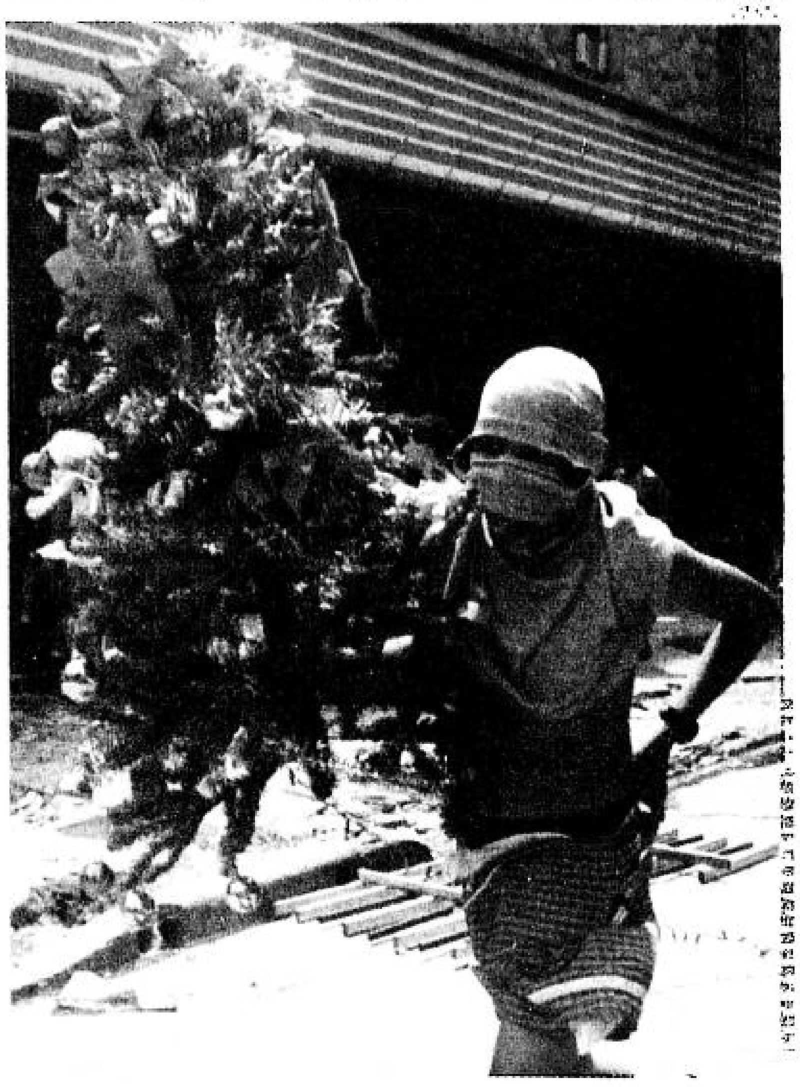


AN ARGENTINE looter runs away with a Christmas tree he took from a shop in Greater Buenos Aires, Dec. 19. The Argentine government declared a state of siege, giving it special powers to confront looting and riots which have left four people dead and hundreds injured. REUTERS

Argentina declares state of siege

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina—Argentina's embattled government declared a state of siege on Wednesday to control the worst civil unrest in more than a decade as at least four people died in widespread looting and rioting triggered by austerity measures and rising poverty.

Economy Minister Ddmingo Cavallo who introduced the austerity measures which triggered the unrest, quit on Thursday. Demonstrators in central Buenos Aires cheered and blew car horns as news of Cavallo's resignation rippled through the city.

A government source said President Fernando De la Rua would also accept the resignations of some other unspecified ministers after his entire Cabinet resigned en masse overnight.

With Cavallo, who many had regarded as president in all but name as he tried to steer the sinking economy away from the brink of potentially the biggest debt default in history, out of the picture, Argentina is effectively rudderless.

Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse thousands of looters in Buenos Aires and northeastern Argentina who ransacked supermarkets as riots that started last weekend boiled over into a free-for-all.

Protesters threw eggs at De la Rua—and a paving stone that landed on the roof of the limousine he was riding in after leaving a meeting. He later blamed the riots on troublemaking "enemies of the Republic."

Curfew

The state of siege, the first since similar 1989 food riots that helped topple former President Raul Alfonsin, gives the government powers to override constitutional rights and impose a curfew, arrest people or even call in the Army.

It is to remain in effect for 30 days—but it failed to deter the protesters. A second wave of spontaneous, peaceful demonstrations continued into the night as largely middle-class protesters blocked main thoroughfares across the capital, thronging at key landmarks.

Police in riot gear guarded shops stocked for Christmas as troubles mounted for De la Rua, struggling against a four-year recession, 18.3 percent unemployment and the biggest debt default ever.

As impatience with De la Rua grew, business leaders vented anger at what they saw as De la Rua's lack of leadership and the opposition in Congress challenged his authority by repealing emergency economic measures. Some politicians openly called for his resignation.

Just minutes after De la Rua addressed the nation on television to blame the rioting on troublemakers, thunderous banging rippled across the capital as a furious public thumped saucepans in a traditional protest and set off firecrackers.

Recession

Amid a worsening recession, the government has cut state pay and pensions by 13 percent and slapped restrictions on cash withdrawals to end a run on banks. Some 2,000 people a day fall below the poverty line in Argentina, which once prided itself on the biggest middle class in Latin America.

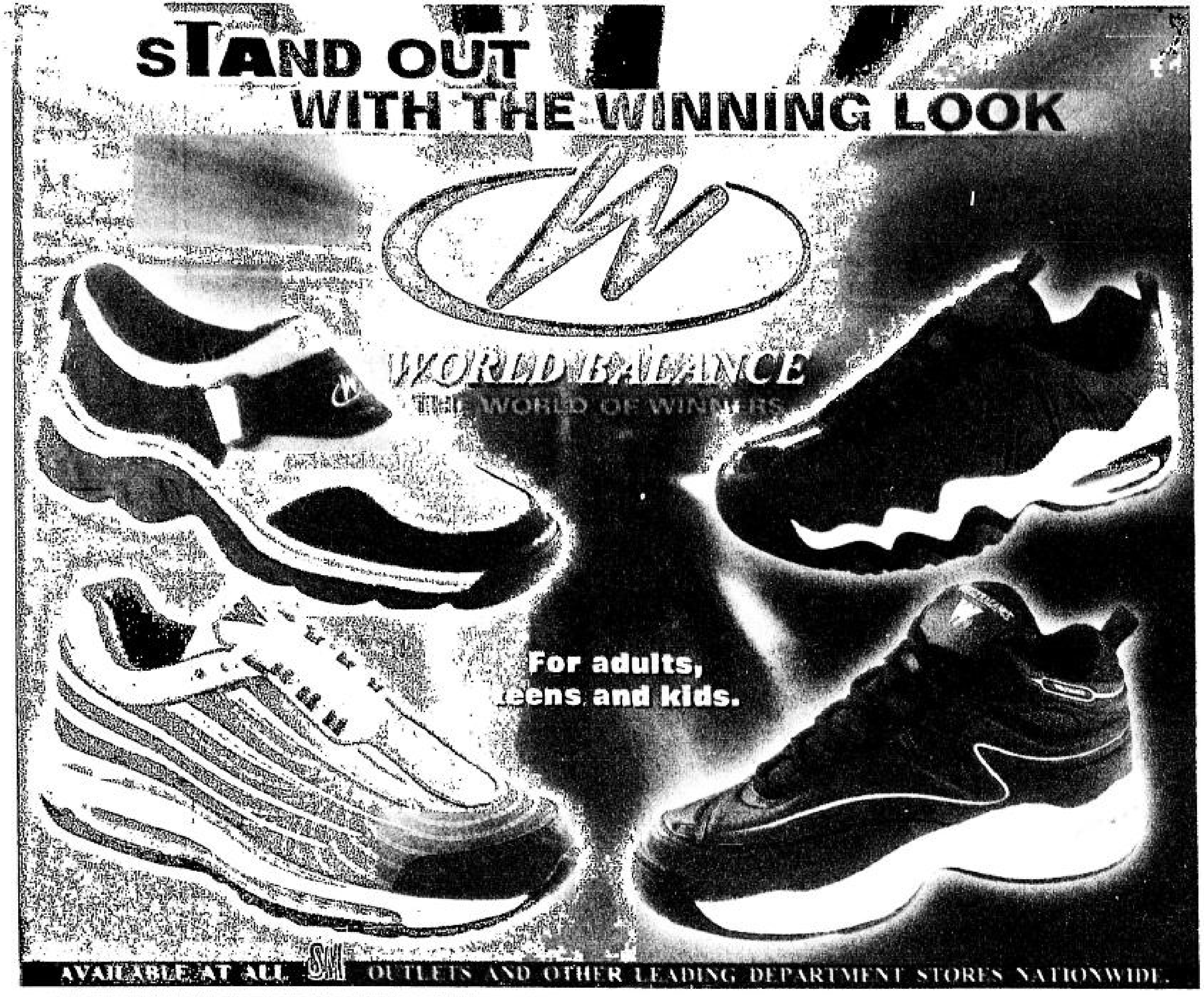
In muggy summer heat, thousands of frustrated Argentines—from unemployed single mothers to political militants—broke into stores and smashed shop windows, stealing items including food, clothing, toilet paper and televisions. The government said there were 20,000 looters in Buenos Aires province alone.

Four people—two men, one woman and a 15-year-old boy—were killed in the violence and five police officers were injured. One man was fatally stabbed by a shop owner outside the capital. The boy was killed by an unknown gunman in a province north of the capital. Two others, a man and woman, were shot during looting as store owners opened fire to protect their goods in a town 300 km from Buenos Aires.

Looters battled with baton-wielding police only 1.6 km away from the presidential palace.

"I feel bad about it but we're dying of hunger," said Sonia Aristici, carrying food from a supermarket in Buenos Aires.

The center-left De la Rua, rock bottom with single digits in public opinion polls midway into his four-year term, ordered $7 million in food aid to be distributed to calm the unrest. He spoke at a military ceremony but made no reference to riots. *Reuters*



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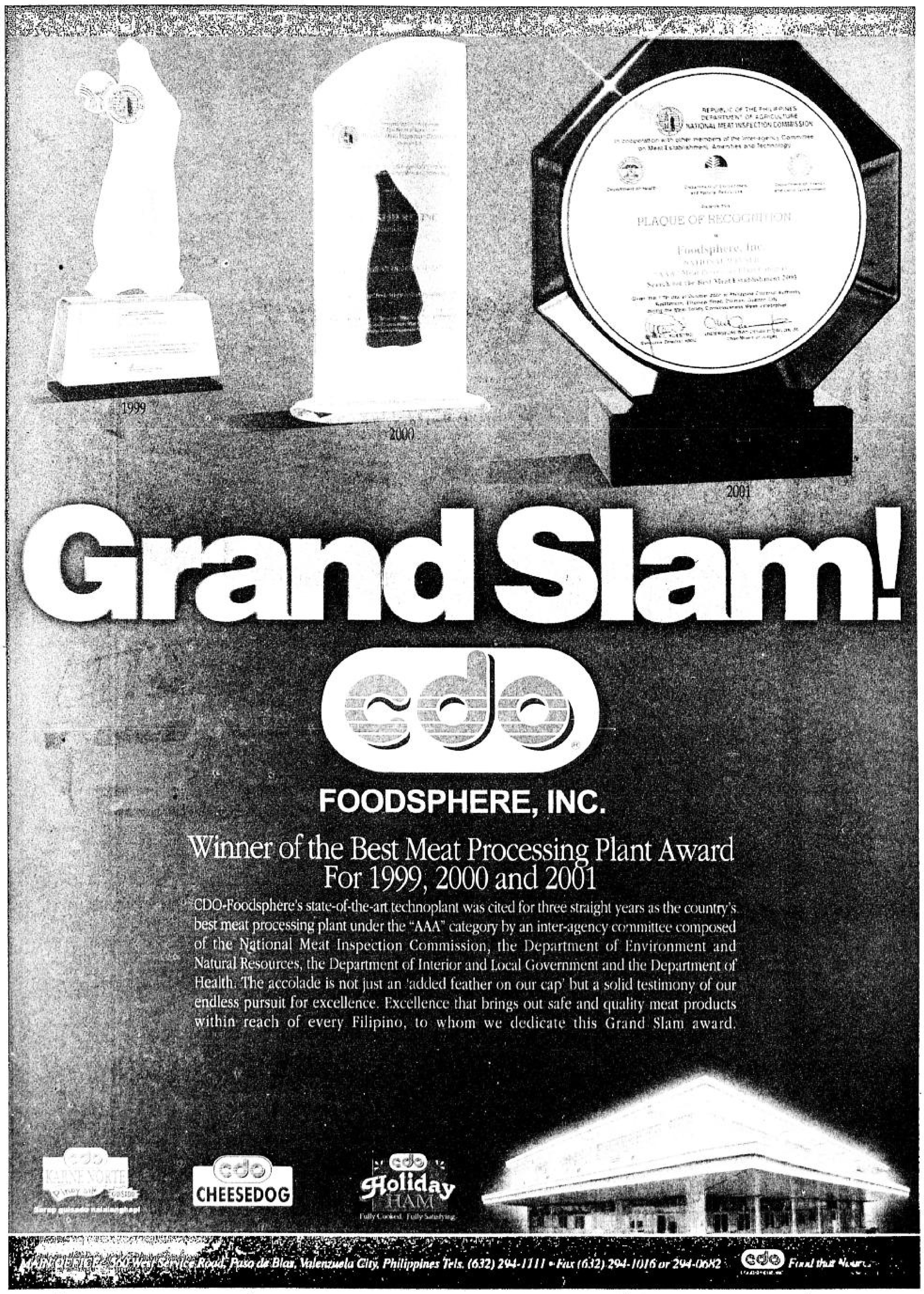

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Sulawesi Muslims, Christians search deal

JAKARTA—Feuding Muslim and Christian factions reached a peace deal on Thursday aimed at curbing three years of brutal religious killings on Indonesia's eastern island of Sulawesi, local television reported.

SCTV television reported from the scene of the tightly guarded talks in Sulawesi that details of the agreement—which follows four failed attempts to halt religious clashes in Central Sulawesi province—would be announced later on Thursday.

The justice minister said Jakarta wanted the talks to be a model for ending religious clashes in the Moluccas islands, although it was unclear if he was aware of the reported deal to bring peace to the area around Poso town in Central Sulawesi.

"The president welcomes the developments in the meeting which have been very conducive and positive in solving the problem in Poso," minister Yusril Ihza Mahendra told reporters after meeting President Megawati Sukarnoputri.

"We are attempting to make the meeting a model for conflict resolution in the Moluccas." He made no further comments.

The Sulawesi peace drive takes place against a backdrop of heightened security across the world's most populous Muslim nation as police try to prevent a repeat of Christmas Eve bombings near churches last year that killed 19 people.

Police said on Wednesday they could not rule out the possibility of unrest during next week's Christmas celebrations after gunmen shot dead nine Christians in Ambon, the main city in the Moluccas, an island chain near Sulawesi that has been ravaged by Muslim-Christian fighting since 1999.

SCTV, a leading local broadcaster, quoted one source as saying the Poso pact would include a vow to maintain the peace around the volatile town and demand that perpetrators of violence be brought to justice. *Reuters*

Meat linked to cancer, says study

WASHINGTON—People who eat a meat-laden diet have more than triple the average risk of esophageal cancer and double the risk of stomach cancer, US researchers reported on Thursday.

The report adds to several studies that link eating meat, especially "red" meat such as beef, with certain cancers. Colon cancer has been the most strongly linked with a high-meat diet.

The study of people living in Nebraska found that those who ate the most meat had 3.6 times the risk of esophageal cancer and double the risk of stomach cancer when compared to people eating what the researchers considered a healthy diet.

People who ate a lot of dairy products, who tended also to eat a lot of meat, had double the risk of both cancers, the researchers report in the January issue of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

Mary Ward, Honglei Chen and colleagues at the National Cancer Institute, Tufts University in Boston and elsewhere surveyed 124 people with stomach cancer, 124 people with esophageal cancer and 449 people who did not have cancer.

The so-called healthy diet had the highest amounts of fruits, vegetables and whole grains and generally matched the government recommendations that people eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day, up to 10 servings of grains, breads and pasta and just two to three small servings of meat. *Reuters*

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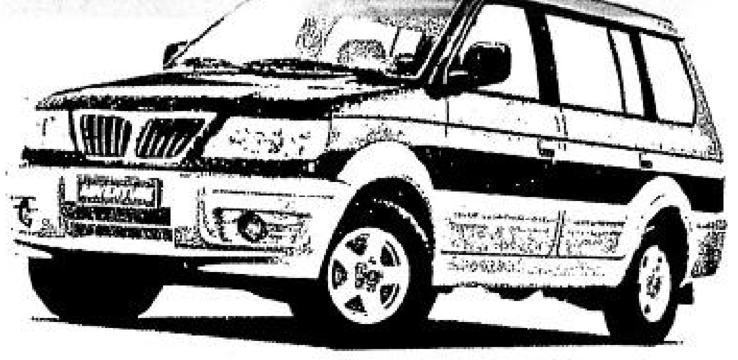

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

India, Pakistan headed for long 'diplomatic winter,' analysts say

Military conflict ruled out

AN INDIAN activist from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) brandishes a sword while shouting slogans against Pakistan during a demonstration in New Delhi Dec. 19. The activists accused Pakistan of last Thursday's attack on the Indian parliament building which killed 14 people, including the five assailants. REUTERS

NEW DELHI—The escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan is unlikely to translate into a military conflict but will lead to a long, nervous "diplomatic winter" between the South Asian nuclear rivals, analysts said Thursday.

The threat of an armed clash has been raised by vocal sabre-rattling on both sides following the Dec. 13 attack on the Indian parliament by five heavily-armed gunmen.

The armed forces on either side of the border have been placed on alert amid reports of heavy additional troop deployments.

India says it has evidence that the gunmen were Pakistan-based militants operating under the guidance of Pakistani military intelligence.

Pakistan has strongly denied any involvement and warned India that it will respond in kind to any cross-border retaliation.

Hawks in the ruling Hindu-nationalist BJP party of Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee have called for military reprisals, including strikes against alleged terrorist camps in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and the pursuit of militants across the disputed Kashmir border.

The Indian government has been treading a fine rhetorical line, reassuring the international community that it will not act in haste, while assuaging domestic anger by insisting that "all options" remain open.

Foreign policy, defense and terrorism experts are almost unanimous in their predictions that India will not take any precipitate action.

"At this juncture, there is absolutely no likelihood of any hot pursuit or any such punitive action," said Ajai Sahni, executive director of the New Delhi-based Institute for Conflict Management, a counter-terrorism research body.

"India does not have this option because it would immediately forfeit the diplomatic and moral high ground," he said.

According to Sahni, a couple of things could happen in the immediate future.

Firstly, India will try to prepare a "watertight" case against Pakistan's involvement in the Dec. 13 attack and present it not just to western nations but also to the United Nations.

"If the case is admitted in the United Nations, under the anti-terrorism resolution 1373, Pakistan will be bound to follow the UN's instructions. Delegitimizing terrorism would be India's top priority," he said.

Secondly, India's "determination and resolve" to fight terrorism will translate into stepped up counter-insurgency operations, particularly in Kashmir.

"The defense budget may go up which will have a psychological impact on Pakistan which will tend to match us at the cost of its social and economic upliftment," Sanhi said.

"I think the earlier philosophy that a powerful and prosperous Pakistan is good for India is going to change and we would be looking at a weaker Pakistan."

While there is unlikely to be any "covert" operation to weaken Pakistan, Sahni said India would be obliged to "prepare for an all-out war even with the risk of a nuclear conflict. And I stress on the word prepare."

Former foreign secretary S.K. Singh agreed that an Indian military operation inside Pakistan was unlikely, but was certain that an intense diplomatic war was in the offing.

"I don't think he (Vajpayee) is thinking of hot pursuit," Singh said. "He has other options in mind. For instance, ending the Indus Valley Water Treaty and starving Sindh and Punjab; send back their ambassador, recall ours, scale down the mission."

The Indus Water Treaty of 1960 governs the distribution of water from the River Indus and its tributaries between India and Pakistan. *AFP*

Hamas vows to halt suicide bombings

JERUSALEM—A senior Hamas official said Wednesday the hardline Palestinian Islamic movement was calling a halt to its devastating suicide bombings against Israel, as senior Israeli and Palestinian officials held their first joint security meeting in more than a week.

"Hamas has taken an internal decision to stop martyrdom operations but we are not going to make an official declaration," the Islamic movement official, who insisted on remaining anonymous, said using the term used by Islamic groups for suicide bombings.

However, the official refused to say what tactics the radical group would use in its avowed struggle to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, or if it would revert to attacks if Israel carries out more "targeted" killings, which have taken a heavy toll on Hamas operatives.

"We can't predict anything," he said.

An official from Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement also said there had been a meeting of various Palestinian factions in the West Bank Wednesday and that Hamas had informed them it was halting its operations.

But in a statement on its official website, Hamas denied it would halt suicide attacks.

The development came as senior Israel and Palestinian security officials held talks for more than three hours in an undisclosed location, the first such meeting since Israel severed ties with Arafat last Thursday, accusing him of failing to rein in militants.

No details about the content of the meeting were disclosed but West Bank security chief Jibril Rajoub had said earlier it would tackle the issue of Israeli forces withdrawing from Palestinian autonomous zones they have reoccupied, and Israeli assassinations of wanted militants. *AFP*

S. Koreans: Don't slam our dog-eating culture

SEOUL—Legislators, doctors and civic group leaders Thursday urged people from overseas to stop criticizing South Korea's dog-eating culture and vowed to launch a campaign against foreign opponents of the nation's centuries-old culinary tradition.

"The issue of dog meat is a matter of national pride," said a joint statement signed by 166 civic leaders. "We have built our food culture through thousands of years. Criticizing us as 'barbarians' for our food culture is tantamount to criticizing our thousands-of-years-old culture itself."

About 3 million of South Korea's 47 million people are believed to eat dog meat as a delicacy.

International animal rights activists, most notably French actress Brigitte Bardot, have renewed their criticism of the Korean custom ahead of next year's World Cup finals, which South Korea will cohost with Japan on May 31-June 30. In November, Fifa President Sepp Blatter urged Koreans to stop eating dog meat during the tournament.

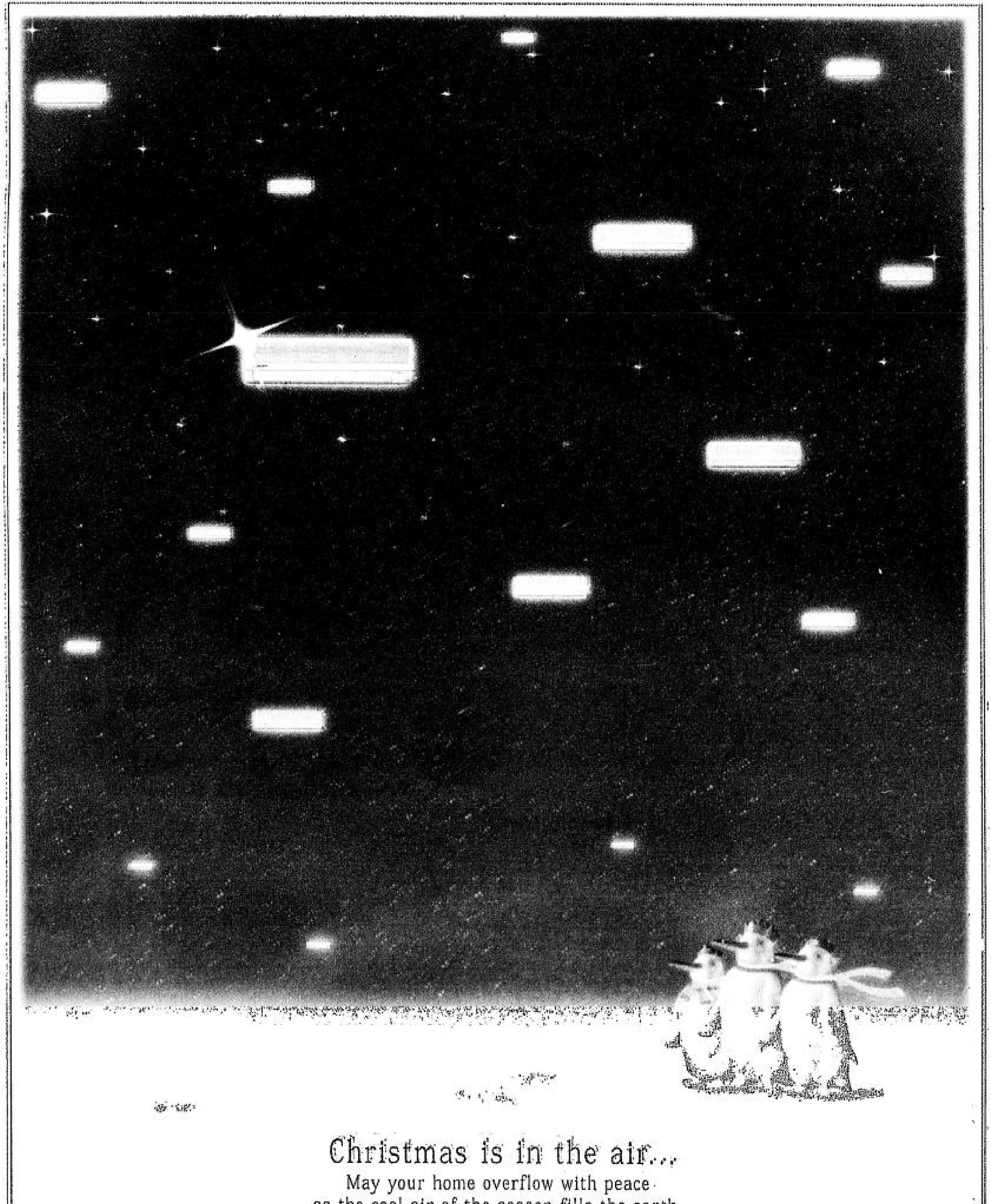
Bardot called Koreans' habit of eating canine flesh "barbarous." That angered many here, who saw it as a slight.

The statement said those criticizing the dog-eating tradition were "self-righteous barbarians" themselves because they refused to understand the culture of other people.

"So far we have responded to the criticism individually or shown no reaction at all, but from now on, we will respond collectively and in an organized manner," the statement said, without elaborating.

South Koreans slaughter only dogs raised for their meat for eating, not pet dogs. Many so-called "meat dogs" are raised in crowded cages in the countryside.

The civic leaders said, however, that South Koreans should "repent" for killing dogs in a gruesome and unhygienic manner and openly displaying the meat for sale. *AP*



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CBCP help sought in Chavit cases

VIGAN CITY—After lodging four complaints, including a plunder case, with the Ombudsman, the Save Ilocos Sur Alliance is seeking the help of the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines in prosecuting former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson.

"Although we recognize the role played by Singson in exposing the shenanigans that occurred during the Estrada administration, we cannot turn a blind eye to the corruption perpetrated in our province by our former governor," the group said in a statement.

"The findings of the Commission on Audit show how grave the abuses committed by Singson in raiding the coffers of the provincial government. Not millions, but billions (of pesos) were spent (fraudulently)."

The group also said its members are "saddened" by the "silence" of the Catholic Church in the province on the issues against Singson.

"We have seen how powerful the church is in shepherding the people to action. Edsa I and Edsa II are monuments to the role of the church in our society. It saddens us though that the church in our diocese, under the leadership of Bishop Edmundo Abaya, fails to take hold of the mantle of leadership, in the face of restiveness of its flock over the issue of corruption in our province."

The group sent copies of its appeal to Bishop Dinualdo Guttierrez, chair of the CBCP committee on social action, justice and peace, and Bro. Armin Luistro, FSC, chair of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines.

The letter was signed by 260 officers and members of Sisa and the Community Information and Assistance (CIA) and some Ilocos Sur leaders.

"Corruption is a moral issue. The church has the moral obligation to defend their flock," Nestor Segismundo, Sisa president, told the INQUIRER.

The Priests Assembly of Ilocos Sur denied the allegations of Sisa on the church's silence on the charges against Singson.

"We are preparing our statement regarding the matter which will come out this month," Fr. Vicente Avila, assembly president, said.

"Do not ever say we are silent because some of us have been discussing the issue in our parishes even though the discussions are not collegial."

Avila said they have been very cautious in reacting to the issue because they are studying the different allegations.

He admitted that priests in Ilocos Sur are divided on the issue. He said Singson had given some priests favors during his incumbency.

He defended Abaya, saying the archbishop has been "doing his job."

"Archbishop Abaya's style is not confrontational but he has done what is expected from him," Avila said.

The INQUIRER tried but failed to get Singson's reaction to Sisa's appeal to the CBCP.

In an earlier interview, Singson denied all the allegations of Sisa, claiming that his detractors were using the group to destroy his credibility.

"They are also trying to provoke me," Singson said.

He earlier urged the office of the Ombudsman to act swiftly on the "nuisance complaints" filed against him.

"I am asking the Ombudsman to act with dispatch so I can address the charges point by point," Singson said in a statement. *Leoncio Balbin Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Northern Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers particularly over the Eastern sections.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Hi 33° Lo 22°
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Hi 25° Lo 14°
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Hi 29° Lo 19°
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 21°
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Hi 31° Lo 21°
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 19°
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 24°
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Hi 30° Lo 21°
Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 30° Lo 24°
Roxas	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 30° Lo 25°
Cebu	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 30° Lo 23°
Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 31° Lo 24°
Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy	Hi 33° Lo 23°
Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 23°
Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains	Hi 31° Lo 23°
Davao	Partly Cloudy	Hi 32° Lo 24°

Compiled by: Ray Loyesa, PDI Research/12/21/01

ROUNDUP

Appeal vs gun firing

COTABATO CITY—Police authorities have appealed to gun owners not to fire their weapons during the Christmas and New Year holidays after a stray bullet, believed to have been fired during Sunday's celebration of the Eid'l Fitr, hit 16-year-old Sarah Mae Lu. Supt. Sangacala Dampac, city police chief, said gun owners should use other noise-making devices during the festivities. "The next victim may be your relative or even yourself," Dampac warned.

Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Bridge to Albay

BACACAY, Albay—The Department of Public Works and Highways will construct a 243.6-meter bridge across the Sula Channel here to connect Cararay Island to mainland Albay. Ed Talastas, DPWH regional planning officer, said the bridge would have a vertical clearance of 10 meters to allow passenger boats and barges to navigate the channel. Albay Rep. Krisel Luisto-Lagman (first district) is now working on the project's funding.

Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Businesswoman robbed

TABACO CITY—A businesswoman lost some P50,000 cash to three unidentified armed holdup men in Barangay Panal here on Tuesday. Elizabeth Cantes, of Barangay Mariroc here, told police that the robbers waylaid the truck she was riding in near the Tabaco National High School at around 8:15 p.m. Police arrested a suspect, identified as Allan Bordorais, in Barangay Guinobat, several meters from where Cantes was held up.

Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Cargo truck hijacked

CABANATUAN CITY—Seven armed men on Wednesday hijacked a cargo truck loaded with P2 million worth of agricultural products in Sta. Rosa town. The truck driver, Jose Bucquio, told police that three men forced him and his three companions out of the vehicle while they were resting in front of the Sta. Rosa Central School. They were taken to a van where four armed men were waiting. Police said the robbers dropped off Bucquio and his companions in a remote village in Zaragoza town.

Anselmo Roque, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Cagayan's most wanted

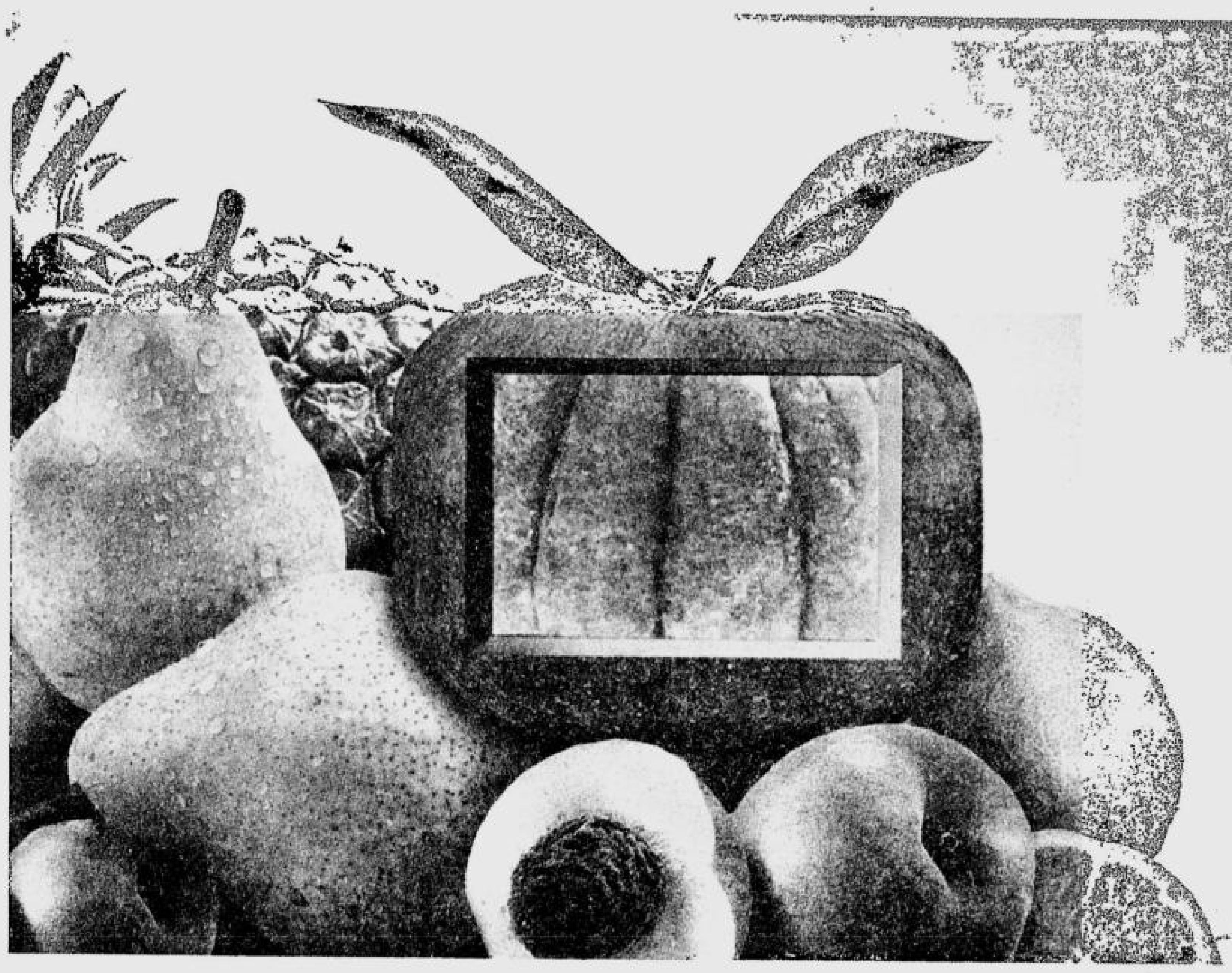
TUGUEGARAO CITY—Police arrested the most wanted criminal in Cagayan after a 10-minute shootout in Baggao town on Monday. Arrested was George Bergonia, who was wounded during the exchange of gunfire with policemen and soldiers at Barangay Mocac. Seized from him were an M-16 rifle, a .38 cal. revolver and four grenades. Bergonia, a former member of Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit in Baggao, had eluded arrest for six years since he bolted out of jail in 1995. He is facing charges for killing five people and wounding seven others when he ran amuck at a dance party in Baggao.

Estanislao Caldez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Biliran prisoner recaptured

PALO, Leyte—Police on Wednesday arrested one of three inmates who escaped from the municipal jail in Culaba, Biliran, last week by breaking the padlock of their cell. Reports reaching the police provincial headquarters at Camp Ruperto Kangleon here said the recaptured prisoner, Francisco Lusdo, was facing two counts of rape and is now back at the Culaba jail. The other escapees, Edmundo Romanos, who is facing acts of lasciviousness charges, and Toto Temblor, who is accused of frustrated homicide, are still at large.

Cynthia Borgueta, PDI Visayas Bureau



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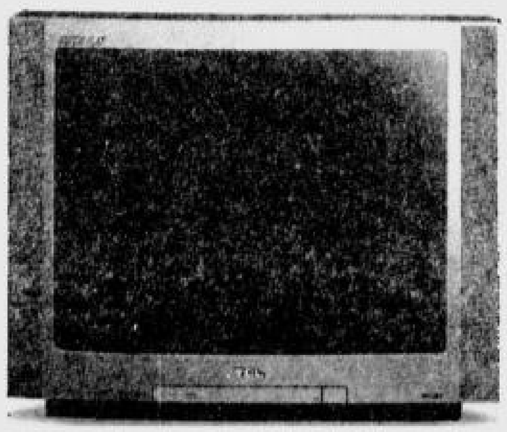

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NPA rebels kill 2 'informers'

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Heavily armed communist rebels on Wednesday shot dead two persons they accused of being military informers in Barangay Tabiac, Igbaras town, 29 kilometers south of here.

It was the first reported violation of a ceasefire declared by the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) and the National Democratic Front (NDF) in the Visayas. The ceasefire started Dec. 15 and will end on Jan. 2.

Government troops are also observing a ceasefire during the period.

Col. Jeffrey Sodusta, chief of Task Group Panay and in-charge of internal security operations in Panay, identified the victims as Alberto Alfaro Jr., 48, and Domingo Eucare, 45.

The armed men left leaflets and hang a streamer on a waiting shed, which claimed that the execution was done by members of the NPA's Napoleon Tumagtang Command under the CPP's Southern Front Committee. The NPA unit operates in the southern towns of Iloilo and part of Antique.

The rebels said the two victims were "informers" of the Philippine Army. The streamer read: "*Paandam sa tanan nga* informer *kag malain nga elemento (makawat). Mag-bag-o na kamo* (Warning all informers and bad elements (thieves). You must change your ways)."

The victims were with three other men in the waiting shed at around 6 a.m. when eight rebels wearing camouflage uniforms approached them and asked for their names.

The rebels, believed to be led by Severino "Ka Dario" Jonago, then shot Alfaro and Eucare in the chest at close range with M-16 and M-14 rifles.

Sodusta said soldiers of the 31st Reconnaissance Company of the Army's Third Infantry Division were pursuing the rebels.

"They (rebels) are just in the area of Ming-ao, Tubungan and Igbaras towns in the first district of Iloilo," Sodusta said in a telephone interview.

Sodusta said the rebels' action was "plain terrorism" as the two victims were "civilians and not informers."

He said government troops have been placed on red alert despite the ceasefire, in anticipation of more attacks in time with the CPP's commemoration of its 33rd founding anniversary on Dec. 26.

The Army has requested Congress for more funds to recruit more troops to counter a reported increase in rebel strength.

A report of the Philippine National Police last month revealed that the number of barangays affected by the communist insurgency in Western Visayas reached 220, or 5.43 percent of the 4,048 barangays in the region.

The figure is up by 172 or 358 percent from last year's figure of 48 barangays.

The PNP report placed the combined strength of the breakaway Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) and the CPP-NPA in the region at 1,011 with 727 firearms for the second quarter.

The figure is slightly lower than the 1,015 rebels with 750 firearms recorded during the first quarter.

In Panay, rebel strength was placed at 187 members with 149 firearms in the second quarter, down from 299 members with 248 firearms in the first quarter.

Aside from the Southern Front, the rebels in Panay operate in three other guerrilla fronts—the Eastern Front, covering parts of Capiz and northern Iloilo; Northern Front, covering Aklan and northern Antique; and the Central Front, covering northern Iloilo and Capiz.

Only the Army's 12th Infantry Battalion and the 31st and 32nd Reconnaissance Companies of the Third Infantry Division were left in Panay after three battalions were deployed to Mindanao. A battalion consists of around 500 soldiers.

HOLIDAY MESSAGE

A child carries a star-shaped placard with an anti-terrorism slogan printed on it during a recent rally for human rights in Davao City.

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Baguio execs urged to ban firecrackers

BAGUIO CITY—A Department of Health official in the Cordillera has asked city officials to amend a city ordinance regulating the distribution and use of firecrackers and pyrotechnic products because it was useless in preventing casualties in the New Year revelry.

Dr. Teresita Bonuan, DOH regional director, said the government should not only regulate firecrackers but also ban their use.

Bonuan said the department would ask the city council to amend Ordinance 356, which regulates the sale and distribution of firecrackers, and to impose a firecracker ban instead.

"We cannot prevent people from buying (strong) firecrackers; it is a part of the Filipino celebration of New Year. Regulating them is not enough, the government should ban them," she said.

"We will urge the city council to amend the ordinance and I hope other regions will follow soon," she said.

Bonuan also said Congress should amend Republic Act No. 7183 or the firecracker law, particularly the section on regulation of firecracker distribution and sale, to reduce the number of casualties during the revelry.

She also said lawmakers should review the law that removed *watusi*, a toxic firecracker commonly used by children, from the list of illegal firecrackers.

"*Watusi* should also be banned to prevent the increasing number of *watusi* poisoning cases," she said, referring to cases of *watusi* ingestion among children.

In the Cordillera, the DOH recorded 56 cases of firecracker injuries from December 2000 to Jan. 5, 2001, an increase from the 49 cases recorded during the same period from 1999 to 2000.

In Bulacan, Rep. Wilfrido Villarama urged police to file charges against Teresita Cristobal, a licensed manufacturer and owner of TIC Fireworks, after a 15-year-old boy and his younger brother were found working at her factory.

The children were turned over by police to the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Sta. Maria town.

Villarama said Cristobal and the children were making the prohibited firecrackers *og*, super *lolo* and *plapla* when caught by the police. ***Jovelyn Reyes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, with a report from Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

Bleak Christmas for fire victims

ILOILO CITY—It's going to be a bleak Christmas for 28 families who lost their homes when fire hit the city's La Paz District on Wednesday.

Nobody was reported hurt but the hour-long fire rendered at least 150 persons homeless and damaged a still undetermined amount of properties.

Residents said they heard a loud explosion, believed to have come from a powerful firecracker or a liquefied petroleum gas tank, before the fire broke out at the house of Eliseo Jadulos in Barangay Rizal.

But Jadulos said the fire started at the house of Dwight Malonda.

The fire quickly spread to adjoining houses.

Twenty-six of the affected families were residents of Rizal, while the rest were from Barangay Punong.

Fred Villanueva, officer-in-charge of the city social welfare office, said 13 of the affected families were staying at Jalandoni Elementary School while the rest sought shelter from their relatives.

The city government brought sacks of rice and boxes of noodles and sardines, as well as blankets and used clothes, to the victims.

On Thursday, packs of milk and chocolate drinks, and canned goods were distributed.

"It's almost Christmas and we want the fire victims feel a bit better by giving them a variety of relief goods," said Villanueva.

Ma. Diosa Labiste, PDI Visayas Bureau

28 Chinese fishers released, draw fines

By Jofelle Tesorio
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Twenty-eight Chinese fishermen, who were caught poaching off Palawan by Philippine authorities, were released after the provincial prosecutor declared that the marine turtles found in their possession were not endangered species.

They, however, received a penalty of one-month imprisonment and P1,000 fine each for illegal entry. But since they had already been detained for almost three months here, they were ordered released.

In a resolution dated Nov. 28, Provincial Prosecutor Reynaldo Guayco said there was no legal basis to charge the Chinese with violation of the Fisheries Code of the Philippines.

Although the law prohibits fishing or taking of rare, threatened or endangered species listed in the Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species and determined by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Guayco said marine turtles or *pawikan* could not be classified as endangered or threatened.

This, he said, was based on Fisheries Administrative Order 208, issued by Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor on May 17, which classified whales, dolphins, giant clams and sharks as endangered species.

Commander Von Chan, operations officer of the Philippine Coast Guard here, however, said that as complainants, they were not given a chance to appeal the dismissal of the cases before the Department of Justice.

According to him, they only received a copy of the prosecutor's order on Dec. 12 or two weeks after it was signed.

The Chinese were released on Dec. 14, along with their two large fishing boats.

'It is going to be moot and academic if we file an appeal to the DOJ when the Chinese are no longer in the Philippines," Chan said.

Lawyer Edward Lorenzo of the Environmental Legal Assistance Center expressed disgust over the dismissal of the complaints, insisting that the evidence against the Chinese was strong.

Marine turtles are declared endangered species in Cites, an international covenant to which the Philippines adheres, Lorenzo maintained.

The Chinese were caught along with 10 Filipinos, who were allegedly used to deceive authorities while they were inside Philippine territory.

According to Supt. Jacinto Diño, police provincial director, the Quiongquiong Hai I and II, with the same Chinese crew on board, were the same boats released in July by the Provincial Committee on Illegal Entrants.

During the first apprehension, more than 100 slaughtered sea turtles were found in the vessels.

MILF: Priest freed 'very soon'

COTABATO CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has expressed confidence that kidnapped Italian priest Giuseppe Pierantoni would be released "very soon."

The rebel group was earlier asked by Malacañang to secure the release of the missionary from his abductors, believed to be members of the Pentagon Group.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, denied speculations that Pierantoni, who was taken from his parish church in Dimataling, Zamboanga del Sur, on Oct. 17, had died.

The priest is very much alive, he said.

Kabalu said the constant movements of his abductors had also weakened Pierantoni, more popularly known here as Father Beppe.

"We are not in a position to say when he would be released. But we are trying our very best to make it sooner," he said.

Kabalu also said MILF emissaries talking with the Pentagon are now working double time "because the (Islamic) fasting month (of Ramadan) is over," he said.

Most Rev. Antonio Franco, the papal nuncio, confirmed that the Catholic hierarchy has launched a backdoor negotiation for the release of Pierantoni.

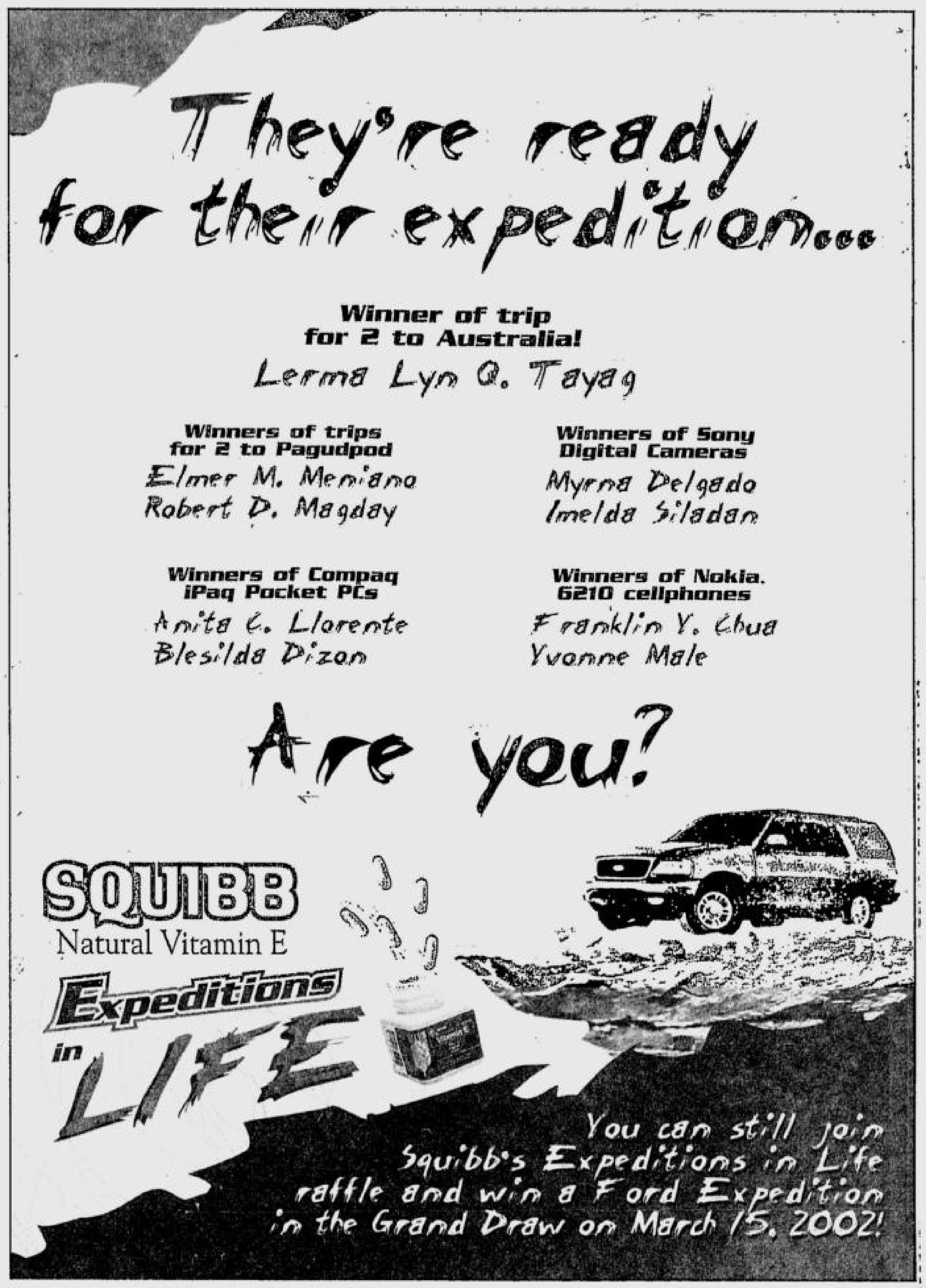
Franco, who visited Mati, Davao Oriental, last week, said the negotiations "have not yielded results as of yet."

"Well, we have already tried, we are doing what we can through our channels," he said.

The kidnappers, led by a certain Macaumbao, are demanding at least P10 million in ransom for the release of the priest.

When asked whether the Catholic Church was willing to pay any ransom, Franco just smiled.

However, Pagadian City Bishop Zacarias Jimenez said the clergy could not be pressured into giving any ransom. 'Not a single cent," he said. *Edwin Fernandez and Ferdinand Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau*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GMA: Good times ahead

(From page A1)

ment and less peso speculation. The government is also on track to keep its budget deficit under the P145-billion ceiling, and hit the P100-billion target in foreign direct investments as early as November.

Camacho said the strong and resilient domestic economy should cushion the Philippines against continued global weakness in the first half of 2002.

This should help the economy post GDP growth of up to 4.5 percent next year—on condition, however, that the US economy recover in the first quarter.

Ms Macapagal said the biggest stumbling block to sustainable economic growth was old-fashioned politicking. "I think one big challenge is the motivation to politick and therefore to bring down the gains of the administration, to bring the administration to disgrace," she said.

Sound fundamentals

"We achieved a respectable economic growth in the midst of a global economy still reeling from the implosion of the IT (information technology) sector followed by the Sept. 11 attack (on the World Trade Center)," the President said during the briefing. "This event . . . would have toppled our economy had we not so firmly anchored it to sound fundamentals."

But she said the country should "try harder" next year due to continued global uncertainty triggered by the international war on terrorism.

"Times will still be tough but the stage has been set for them to get better," she said.

"There is good ground to hope for a better year, but equally compelling reason to try harder in the year to come," she continued.

She said the economy was in bad shape when she assumed office on Jan. 20.

She said her predecessor, ousted President Joseph Estrada, left a fiscal deficit that threatened to balloon to P225 billion; below-target revenues due to massive leakage and smuggling; unchecked government spending; tripled borrowings; steep peso depreciation; and very low investor confidence.

"Thank God that these concerns have eased. We have a stable economy (now)," Ms Macapagal said.

She conceded that growth had still not significantly improved the situation for poor people in the Philippines.

"Now that we have achieved this good macroeconomic stability, this is now the setting where we can make the poor feel an improvement in their lives," she said.

She congratulated her "dream economic team," consisting of Trade Secretary Mar Roxas, Bangko Sentral Gov. Rafael Buenaventura, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, Camacho and Canlas.

Investor confidence in the Philippines was severely tested this year by rampant kidnappings, bouts of exchange-rate volatility, political instability and the slump in global growth.

But because of strong farm output, lower unemployment, and strong industrial performance, officials expect healthy GDP growth for 2001 and better prospects for 2002. GDP measures the value of the economy's total output.

Canlas said the latest labor force survey in October showed lower unemployment while power sales of the Manila Electric Co. increased, suggesting higher utilization by businesses and residential consumers.

He said November was also a harvest period and the strong performance indicated a 9-percent growth in rice production in the fourth quarter.

GDP must pose a growth of 3.9 percent during the fourth quarter to bring the average improvement for the year to 3.3 percent, the low-end of the government's economic growth target this year.

"Given the performance of the domestic economy in 2001, where we saw agriculture and services exhibiting capacity for growth, we see this as continuing in 2002," Canlas said.

"So for next year, with the expected recovery of the US economy, we are forecasting a growth rate in real GDP of between 4 and 4.5 percent."

Economists' reaction

Economists agreed the Philippines had performed better than most countries in the region this year, but said the growth figures appeared optimistic, given third-quarter growth of 2.9 percent and the likely slowdown after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Although the government figures only restated previous forecasts, local financial markets took heart from the reassurance and ended up stronger, dealers said.

The main stock market index ended up 0.93 percent at 1,139.87 points while the peso was at 51.25 to the dollar at midday from Wednesday's close of 51.35.

But some economists said the optimism might be overdone.

"There have been some positive surprises along the way (earlier in the year) but I was indifferent to the announcements . . . the economic targets were not new," said Grace Cerdenia, research head of online brokerage 2TradeAsia.com.

A Reuters poll of economists published on Wednesday predicted 2001 GDP growth of 3 percent in 2001 and 2.86 percent in 2002.

"I am looking for 3.5 percent (growth in 2002) but I am taking a really cautious stance," said Luz Lorenzo, an economist at ATR Kim Eng Securities.

"I agree that agriculture and services will continue to drive growth and the recovery of the US economy will probably lead to an improvement in manufacturing. It's just the magnitude that I differ on."

Reuters polls elsewhere in Asia showed only India and China were likely to post substantially higher growth rates than the Philippines this year, although the 2002 forecast was one of the lowest in the region.

The budget deficit from January to November was at P144.63 billion, and finance officials said the government was likely to post a surplus in December.

The January-November figure is 4.8 percent lower than the 11-month target of P151.9 billion, the department said in a statement.

Camacho said he expected a P6.92-billion surplus for December as spending eases and revenues rise.

"Given the fiscal numbers we are now seeing, coupled with what we anticipate for December, I am positive that the P145-billion target is within reach," he added.

Lorenzo said this was a more achievable target and that it was a good sign for the economy.

The government is targeting a P130-billion budget deficit next year and a balanced budget by 2006, Camacho said.

Argentina fallout?

The economic managers also downplayed the possibility of fallout from Argentina's economic crisis impacting upon the Philippines.

"So far it appears to be an isolated case," Buenaventura told reporters. "It's a unique problem in Argentina."

Argentina was under a state of emergency Thursday in the face of violent unrest over the country's crumbling economy, as labor unions announced a general strike and Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo resigned.

"I don't think so," Camacho told reporters when asked if the Argentine crisis would affect sentiment here.

"We have decoupled ourselves from Argentina as we have a consistent performance in our fiscal management," he said.

Buenaventura said the annual inflation rate for 2002 was forecast at 5-6 percent, while interest rates were expected to be in the 10-11 percent range.

The annual inflation rate for 2001 was estimated at 6.1 percent while interest rates for the benchmark 91-day treasury bills are now just under 9 percent.

In the briefing, Ms Macapagal said the government would continue to narrow the budget deficit next year by raising the collection of taxes and customs duties. From January to November this year, the Bureau of Internal Revenue exceeded its target by P400 million.

She added that the government would work all out to clear the "bottlenecks" involving some of the following "big-ticket items": the Philippine National Bank rehabilitation plan; the resumption of operations of the National Steel Corp.; credit restructuring for the housing industry; the Metro Rail Transit; and garbage.

The inter-agency Development Budget and Coordination Council decided to downscale the growth targets next year to 4 to 4.5 percent for the GDP and to 4.1 to 4.6 percent for GNP (which measures GDP plus income from abroad).

Much of the expected GDP growth next year would have to come during the second semester, once the export sector had recovered.

The inter-agency DBCC adjusted its export growth target to zero percent from 6 percent next year and the growth in imports to 3 percent from 7 percent. This year, the government believes exports would contract by 15 percent. ***With reports from AP, AFP, Reuters***

OIC agrees Misuari to be returned to RP

(From page A1)

Misuari as MNLF chair, won as governor.

The communique also noted that the Nov. 19 attacks against military and police camps in Sulu by Misuari's armed loyalists constituted a violation of the 1996 peace agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF.

Indonesia chairs the Organization of Islamic Conference's Committee of the Eight which is in charge of supervising the implementation of the peace accord.

The communique, however, stressed that Misuari would be accorded respect and dignity as a leader of the Bangsamoro people.

But the same communique said that Misuari would have to face the charges filed against him in connection with the Nov. 19 rebellion in Sulu.

The same communique likewise noted that the MNLF leadership dispute as well the MNLF issue constituted an internal matter to the Philippines.

Palace sources said Vice President and Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona signed the communique with his Indonesian and Malaysian counterparts spelling out a general agreement on the repatriation of Misuari, former chair of the Moro National Liberation Front.

The communique was presented to President Macapagal who lauded the foreign ministers for coming up with an agreement on Misuari.

Earlier, government officials were divided on what to do with Misuari, with one group demanding that he be brought back to the country and another advising exile, a source in Malacañang told the INQUIRER last night.

According to Speaker Jose de Venecia, the government was considering asking the influential OIC to take custody of Misuari.

HERE for Misuari: Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar (left) and Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr. Nur Hassan Wirajuda (right). They flank DFA Undersecretary Lauro Baja Jr. ROGER MARGALLO

He said that under the scheme, it was possible that Misuari could be taken to Libya.

De Venecia also said that Wirajuda and Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid arrived here yesterday to explore this option with Philippine officials.

The foreign ministers met with Vice President and Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona Jr. earlier yesterday.

"From these talks, we'll formulate the course of action that the Philippines will take," Guingona said later at a press conference. Neither of the foreign ministers took questions from reporters.

But Wirajuda said: "We are closely monitoring the progress of the implementation of the peace agreement in Southern Philippines." He was referring to the OIC-brokered accord signed in 1996 by the Philippine government and the then Misuari-led Moro National Liberation Front.

On Wednesday night, the Vice President reiterated to the INQUIRER the government's position that Misuari would be accorded the courtesy due a former elected official.

"Misuari will be treated with respect once he is taken into custody by the Philippine government. He will not be handcuffed," Guingona said in a meeting with INQUIRER editors.

'Win-win'

The visit to Manila of the foreign ministers is aimed at working out a "win-win" situation to overcome the Misuari impasse.

Misuari, 60, was arrested in Malaysia on Nov. 24 for illegal entry. He fled to that country after a revolt in Jolo on Nov. 19 by his loyalists in the MNLF was put down last month.

Malaysia wants to return Misuari to the Philippines, which is reluctant to accept him so soon and was considering letting him stay in a third country until January.

"But the timing now is not right to deport Misuari to a third country. Manila will come under flak for not taking him back, "a senior official told Agence France Presse.

The Malacañang source told the INQUIRER that if the option of exile were to be taken, Libya was the only country willing to take Misuari.

But Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said that while his government was determined to deport Misuari, it was prepared to consider the ex-governor's request for political asylum.

"We shall study it," he was quoted as saying by Malaysia's official Bernama news agency, while vowing to deport any foreigner found engaged in terrorism.

Fearful

The Macapagal administration was reportedly reluctant to bring Misuari back straight away for fear that he could become a rallying point for discontented supporters in the mostly Muslim Southern Philippines.

"We are looking into the possibility of an OIC custody for Nur Misuari, and that is a very strong option," De Venecia told reporters on board the Metro Rail Transit, which he took yesterday in going to the House of Representatives.

He said this would solve the impasse "without exacerbating the possibility of more demonstrations in Mindanao or here in Metro Manila" and show that the government was not mistreating the ex-governor.

"After all, he was the father of the autonomy movement and waged a struggle for Muslim autonomy for more than 30 years," De Venecia said.

Earlier in the day, De Venecia met with Norberto Gonzales, the President's emissary to Malaysia and adviser on special concerns..

He said that he and Gonzales discussed the options on Misuari's fate, and that "the report out of Malaysia is good."

Between devil and deep blue sea

Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen had earlier said it would be a wise decision for the government to allow Misuari to seek asylum or exile in other countries.

"Right now, we're torn between the devil and the deep blue sea, and the lesser evil is for him to be exiled abroad," Dilangalen said.

He pointed out that Misuari commanded 80 percent of the MNLF and was recognized by the OIC as the leader of the once-secessionist group.

Dilangalen noted as well that while Hussin now chaired the 15-member council that replaced Misuari as head of the MNLF, he was recognized only as the new ARMM governor.

Fort Magsaysay

Officials in Nueva Ecija are not opposed to the planned detention of Misuari at an Army camp in the province.

Gov. Tomas Joson III told reporters that if the President were to order Misuari's detention at Fort Magsaysay in Palayan City, they would respect that decision.

But Joson said "proper coordination" should be made with the provincial government. "It is important that we know the details of Misuari's detention," he said in Filipino.

Brig. Gen. Alberto Braganza, newly designated commander of the Army's 7th Infantry Division, also said Fort Magsaysay would be ready for Misuari if the decision to hold him there were made.

Braganza, a former senior military aide of Ms Macapagal, assumed his post on Dec. 19. Fort Magsaysay, a 35,000-hectare military reservation, is about 20 kilometers east of Cabanatuan City.

The late Benigno Aquino Jr. and Jose Diokno were imprisoned there in 1972 on orders of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos.

Their detention cells were located in an abandoned building near the main gate of the camp, which then housed the Army's First Infantry (Tabak) Division. ***With reports from AFP; Norman Bordadora in Manila; Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk***

Sulu Sultan to GMA: Stop attacks

(From page A1)

ing to convince some 500 Misuari loyalists in Silangkan, site of the main camp of the ex-governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, to lay down their arms.

Members of the 104th Brigade under Col. Romeo Tolentino took over the camp late last month after relentless ground and air operations.

But thousands of residents have fled their homes to escape the military operations and are now crowding all available evacuation centers. Most of them are from the municipalities of Parang, Maimbung, Indanan, Patikul and even the capital town of Jolo.

Silangkan is located in Parang, which has the biggest number of evacuees, followed by Patikul.

Residents of Kasulutan and Palar villages, Gandasuli and even parts of Bus-bus, all located near the military headquarters, have also left their homes because of the continuing threat posed by Misuari loyalists.

Virtual standstill

Relief agencies and local government units are barely able to cope with the massive displacement of residents.

Livelihood activities, particularly in the affected areas, are at a virtual standstill.

Sultan Esmail said a ceasefire would give traditional leaders a chance to negotiate with the renegade groups, "help solve our deteriorating peace and order conditions, (and enable us) to attain sustainable development in this jurisdiction."

His legal counsel, Ulka Ulama, expressed optimism that the President would "favorably consider" the request which he described as an "urgent matter."

"Untold suffering has been inflicted on innocent civilians who have lost not only their loved ones but also their homes and their livelihood," Ulama said.

The military intensified pursuit operations in known strongholds of the Abu Sayyaf and the Misuari group responsible for the Nov. 19 dawn attacks that left at least 100 civilians dead and scores injured.

As a result of the attacks, rebellion charges against Misuari and seven others were filed with the Jolo municipal court.

But Misuari has maintained that the attacks were in retaliation for the "harassment" and "assault" on his camp in Silangkan, where he convened a "congress" early last month and renewed his call for an independent state.

The government, however, viewed the move as an attempt by Misuari to stop the conduct of the Nov. 26 ARMM election, which had already been postponed several times, extending his term as governor from three to five years.

Congress limits rent hike to 10% per year

(From page A1)

Macapagal-Arroyo in the next few days.

The President had initially opposed an extension of the rent control law because, according to her spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao, it would be bad economics.

But Zubiri said intense public pressure turned the tide in favor of the 5.5 million affected Filipinos.

Zubiri's bill was approved by the House in October but the Senate approved its version only this week.

Sen. Ralph Recto said that to allay fears of the business sector engaged in the shelter industry, the measure exempts rent-to-own agreements from the rental increase limit.

"This legislation will not only ease the burden of renters in the coming years but also spur construction activities," Recto said.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan, chair of the Senate committee on housing, said the measure includes a mandate for the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) to formulate an exit program so that a rent control law will no longer be needed when the current measure expires in 2005.

The HUDCC, chaired by Secretary Michael Defensor, will be given six months from Jan. 1, 2002, when the law takes effect, to come up with the exit program.

"We agreed with that and within six months we can come up with a thorough study of the rent control program," Defensor told the INQUIRER.

The exit program will include an incentive package for prospective investors in the shelter industry "to spur growth in the housing sector," Defensor said.

Rep. Prospero Nograles, chair of the House committee on housing, said the Rental Reform Act allows a rent-to-own scheme between the lessor and the lessee that would result in the transfer of ownership to the latter.

The new measure also listed the grounds for the ejectment of a lessee:

- Subleasing without the owner's written permission.
- Nonpayment of rent for at least three months.
- Legitimate need of the owner to use the unit after giving a written notice three months in advance.
- A need to undertake repairs with an existing order of condemnation.
- Expiration of the lease contract.

Tips on how to party

(From page A1)

weekly New Scientist reports this week:

• DRINK: A quick icebreaker is champagne, for tests confirm the popular view that the bubbles in bubbly really do help to make tipplers tiddly.

Psychopharmacologists from Britain's University of Surrey gave two glasses of either fizzy champagne or flat champagne to 12 volunteers and then tested their alcohol levels and perception.

Just five minutes into the 40-minute session, the fizzy drinkers had an average of 54 milligrams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood. Those drinking flat champagne averaged just 39mg/100ml of blood. By the end, the fizzy group had nudged the legal drink-driving limit in Britain of 80mg/100ml, whereas the flat group was still under 60mg/100ml.

And in standard psychomotor tests, those who drank bubbly champagne took 200 milliseconds longer on average to notice peripheral objects than when they were sober. Those on flat champagne took only an extra 50 milliseconds.

• DINNER-TIME: Swiss inventor Paolo Rais has just the answer for people who want to get away from crashing bores: a dining table whose chairs keep moving so that nobody spends more than 10 minutes sitting opposite each other.

A little electric motor hauls the chairs around, as well as wooden trays on the table on which the food is placed. That way, your dinner always stays in front of you.

"I've written to the British royal family, because such a table would be a great way for the Queen to meet all her guests at banquets," says Rais, adding with some surprise: "But I have had no reply."

• STIMULATING THE CONVERSATION: A firm in Nashville, Tennessee, has patented psychological crockery aimed at enlivening table talk.

As you eat the food on your plate, questions are revealed that are designed to be conversational gambits, such as "Which relative makes you want to run for cover?" and "What did you do to receive the most memorable punishment of your life?" (probably best avoided for family reunions and jailhouse Christmas dinners). *AFP*

Red wine . . .

(From page A1)

of London researchers: The French drink red wine, whereas in Britain, the favored tipple is beer or white wine.

According to the researchers, red wine is rich in polyphenols. These helpful molecules inhibit a peptide called endothelin-1, which causes blood vessels to constrict and has been fingered as a major villain in heart disease.

The scientists tested polyphenols from red wines on a lab-dish culture of cells taken from the lining of cows' aortas.

They found that the polyphenols strongly suppressed production of endothelin-1, apparently by blocking the action of the gene responsible for the peptide.

The team then took the tests a step further, using alcohol-free samples of 23 red wines, four white wines, one rose and one red grape juice.

The red wines again performed admirably, and the grape juice also had an inhibitive, although far smaller, effect.

But the white wine and rose had no effect on the endothelin-1 at all.

As the rose was made from the same variety of grape, cabernet sauvignon, as the red wines, the scientists suppose that something must happen during the vinification process of red wine that helps to create the polyphenols.

"A moderate intake of red wine can prevent coronary heart disease," they conclude soberly.

But finding exactly how polyphenols work their wonder could lead to treatments to prevent cardiac disease without even having to reach for the corkscrew.

The research, led by Roger Corder of the university's William Harvey Research Institute, is published in Nature, the peer-assessed British science weekly.

Red wine features alongside olive oil, fish and fruit as a component in the Mediterranean Diet, proclaimed as a source of good health and longevity along the northern rim of the Mediterranean Sea. *AFP*

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‘God’s message’ guides GMA on coco levy use

Year-end Media Economic Brief
with
H.E. PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
20 December 2001
Executive Lounge

LIGHT moments among the heavyweights—BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura, President Macapagal-Arroyo and Finance SecretaryJose Isidro Camacho—at the media economic briefing. EDWIN BACASMAS

(From page A1)

that's what I really want," she said.

The President on Tuesday ordered government lawyers to find ways to recover the some P700 million in dividends earned by the sequestered 27-percent stake of the Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) in SMC.

She said the government's new set of nominees at UCPB, which administers the CIIF funds, could declare that the dividends could be used to prop up low copra buying price.

The President said other funds from the coco levy could be released.

"This is because the Supreme Court, in ruling that the Presidential Commission on Good Government can sit on the 15-member UCPB board, said the coco levy funds were "prima facie (apparently) public funds," she said.

The current UCPB board consists of nominees of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

New UCPB directors

She said her administration had earlier identified the people who would take over the UCPB board. But some, like banker Deogracias Vistan who became president of Equitable PCI in June, are no longer available.

The government had named Vistan chair of the UCPB board but he was not able to assume the post as Estrada's appointees did not vacate their board seats.

Others nominated by the Macapagal administration to the UCPB board were Francisco del Rosario, Oscar Santos, Efren Villaseñor, Conrado Limcaoco, Alex Magno and Ma. Jose Rufino, Manuel Valdehuesa, Helen Osias, Dunga Lim, Francisco Lejano, Rolando Golez, Juan Carlos, Teresita Baltazar, and Romeo Arceo Jr.

Ms Macapagal said she had ordered the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) to submit next week a development plan, which could be funded by the coco levy funds.

‘Balato’

"Because this (dividend) is only the first of many funds. This is only a fruit. This is not a capital. And I said come up with a program. But I want the first *balato* (tip) to go to the farmers in the form of price support," she said.

An interim agreement among claimants to the coco levy funds is needed to release the P700 million, according to a PCGG official.

But farmers' groups opposed the proposed interim agreement as it would amount to recognizing the claim of SMC chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. over the coco levy funds.

"This will further tighten his control over the funds," said Rafael Mariano, chair of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

Mariano said the proposed interim agreement was "no less than a compromise with Cojuangco."

PCGG Commissioner Victoria Avena had said that the defendants in the coco levy cases pending before the Sandiganbayan, including Cojuangco and 60 others, must agree to the interim agreement before it could be considered for approval by the anti-graft court.

The KMP has been pushing for a "permanent solution" to end coconut farmers' long wait for the full release of the coco levy collected from them from 1973 to 1982, which is now estimated at P130 billion.

Mariano said the "permanent solution" called for the freeing of the entire P130 billion.

Camacho out; Roxas to review SMC-Kirin deal

(From page A1)

government's shareholdings in SMC.

But yesterday she said she was pulling Camacho out of the review to satisfy his critics.

"He's a renowned, experienced investment banker . . . but we have those who don't want us to succeed by casting aspersions on Lito (Camacho)'s objectivity because once upon a time Kirin was a client (of his).

"And of course you know, for such an international banker like Lito, which major company is not a client?" the President said.

As country head of the Banker's Trust Manila and Singapore in the 1990s, Camacho broached the idea of Kirin's investment with SMC. Banker's Trust has since been absorbed by Deutsche Bank, now Kirin's financial adviser for the purchase of a 15-percent stake in SMC.

Wall Street banker

"(J)ust not to jeopardize anything that will come out, I hereby transfer the function to another Wall Street banker, Mar Roxas," she said.

With the President's announcement, Camacho, who was seated to her left, looked flushed but he kept grinning.

Roxas, who was a seat away from the President, turned and looked at the President, his eyes wide open.

But he and Camacho quickly recovered.

"I trust Kirin was never his client," a smiling Ms Macapagal said of Roxas.

"But he thinks it's, OK," the President told reporters, eliciting more laughter.

The President took pride in her economic team, saying she had a "very homogenous" team. "You can substitute one for the other. It's gonna be the same," she said.

Roxas said that he was taken aback by the President's announcement and that he would need to sit down with Camacho to discuss the issues involved in the deal.

Camacho said the government's interest should be focused on enhancing the value of the shares held by the PCGG for the coconut farmers and not necessarily on the preserving of the 27-percent stake.

The planned investment of Kirin in SMC should be interpreted as a "seal of good housekeeping" for the Philippine government, according to Ms Macapagal.

She said Kirin's offer must be entertained as long as it would not conflict with the government position that the coconut levy funds, which account for 27 percent of SMC, were public funds and that the proceeds of the investment must immediately benefit the farmers.

"The Cabinet had a discussion where it was pointed out that you don't throw away an investment like Kirin. We don't want a black eye and put bureaucratic elements there," the President said.

Main goal

Although he echoed the President's view that the Kirin investment was a big boost to investor confidence in the country, Roxas maintained that the main goal of his committee was to ensure that the SMC-Kirin deal would have no negative effect on the interests of the government and the public in SMC.

He was referring to the 27-percent stake of the Coconut Industry Investment Fund currently, which was sequestered by the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG).

Kirin's acquisition of a stake in SMC through the sale of unissued shares is expected to dilute the government holdings in the company, including the stake of the Social Security System and Government Service and Insurance System. The deal could even shift control of the company from the government to Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr.

The PCGG had earlier said that the government could get a bigger premium on the SMC shares if the government shares were sold as a block (including the unissued shares) because it would give the potential buyer a controlling stake in the company.

A Malacañang source said the Roxas committee was likely to focus on a voting trust agreement signed between Cojuangco and Kirin wherein the Japanese brewery would first confer with Cojuangco before casting its vote on any board decisions. Kirin also promised to support Cojuangco's continued stay in SMC as its chair.

The source said the government would insist on being made a party to the trust agreement in order to neutralize any advantage that Cojuangco might get from this arrangement.

Wagging the dog

The source described the trust agreement as "a tail wagging the dog."

In the Senate, Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta said Malacañang's flip-flopping on the SMC-Kirin deal was not doing the country's image any good.

Oreta noted that Malacañang appeared to have reached a consensus welcoming the Kirin buy-in into SMC.

But other officials of the executive branch, particularly the PCGG, have begun questioning the deal.

"Malacañang's moves tend to give the impression that it is blocking what is considered the single biggest foreign direct investment in the Philippines in recent years," Oreta said.

"This impression will send the wrong signals to foreign investors and could not have come at a worse time especially with the release of a recent survey showing that multinationals now consider the Philippines the least attractive investment site among Southeast Asian economies," she said.

A survey of Philippine-based multinationals by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) showed that 63 percent believed the country was less attractive than the rest of Southeast Asia. *With a report from Cynthia D. Balana*

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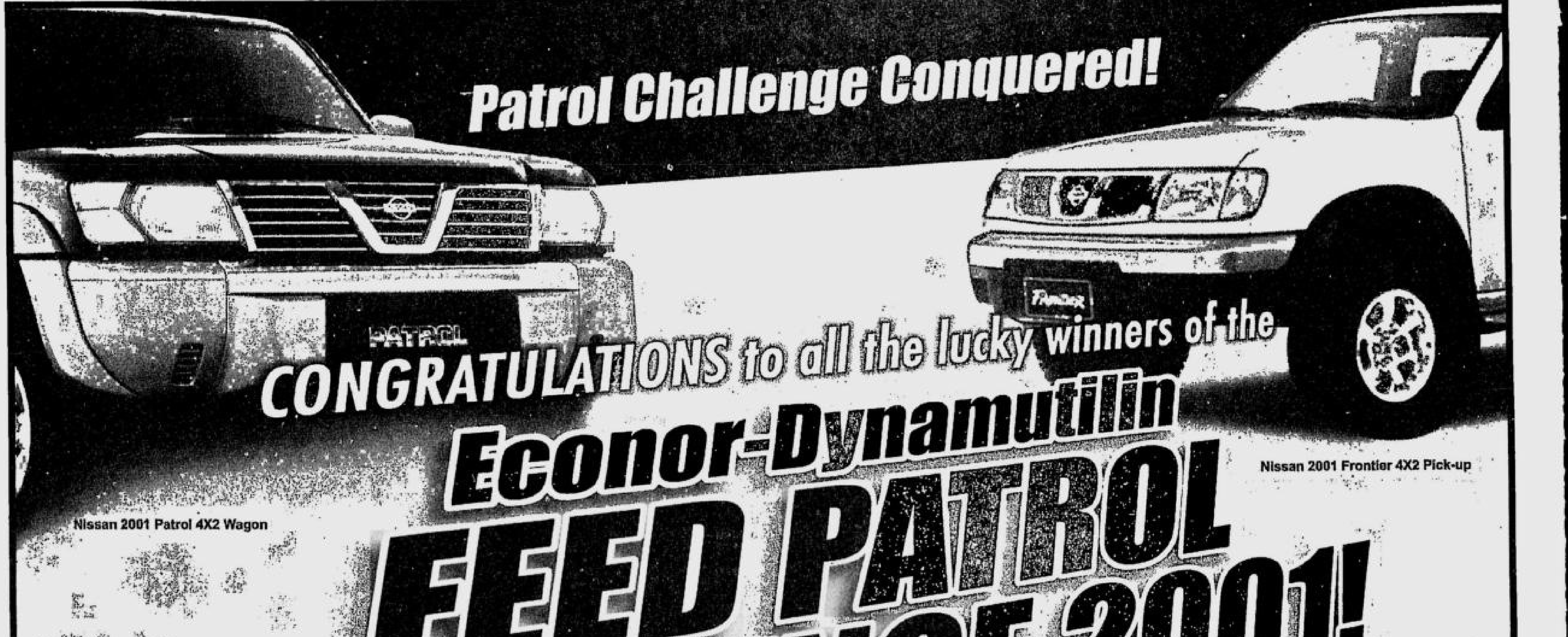

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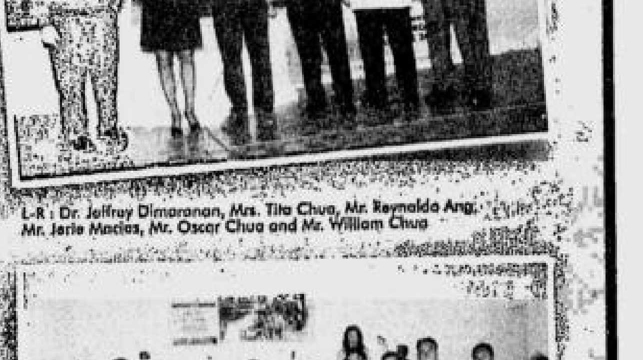

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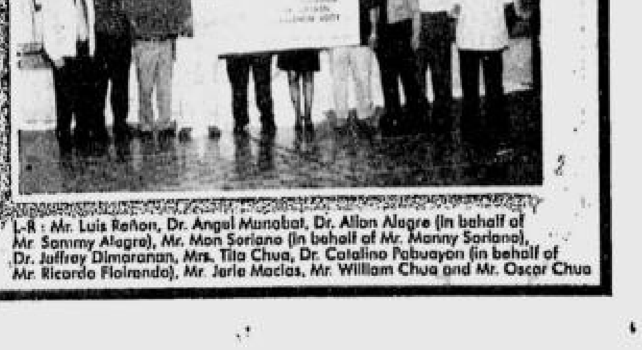

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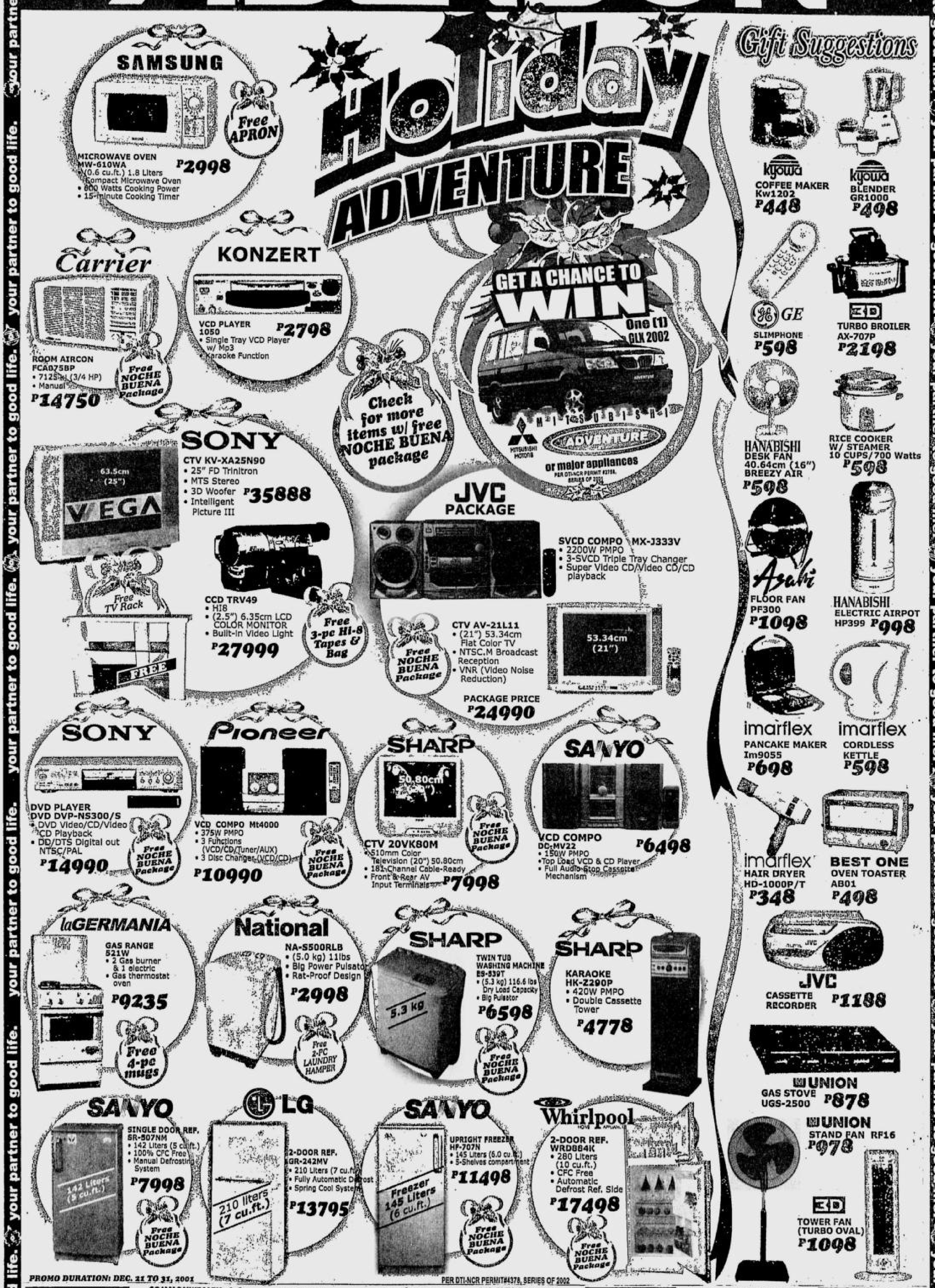

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UAAP CONTROVERSY

La Salle protests track results

GENILZA

By Marc Anthony Reyes

JONAH Genilza was ecstatic as she received her third straight MVP award recently in the UAAP track and field competitions amid the celebration of her fellow La Salle athletes, who also emerged second overall in the men's and women's divisions.

But the jubilation turned into shock and dismay as UAAP officials made some few corrections on the point system and ruled that Genilza wasn't worthy of the MVP plum and that the La Salle men's and women's teams were actually fourth and third, respectively, placers in their respective categories.

That embarrassing incident happened because UAAP officials tried to change the rules at the last minute without informing everybody, especially La Salle's sports director Danny Jose and assistant coach Jeoffrey Chua.

Jose said they are filing a protest before the UAAP board after the track and field committee decided to change the point system in relays which were detailed in article 13, paragraph A, section 5 of the UAAP constitution and by-laws.

"It's very unfair to make last-minute changes without informing us," said Chua, who added that the adjustments of points in track and field could very much affect La Salle's chance of winning the race for the UAAP general championship which the Archers are currently leading.

Under the existing rules, relay events award 14, 10, eight, six, four and two points to the first six placers, respectively. But UAAP decided to use a new method which gives the finishers seven, five, four, three and one points, instead. In the MVP race, they counted the individual medals and excluded the team medals, which has been the practice.

That created a lot of difference in the standing and the MVP contest as Genilza suddenly dropped from the individual ranking in favor of Far Eastern University's Rosie Villarito.

"We have no complaints against Villarito because she deserves that award," said Chua. "But we are protesting the manner they handled the computation of the points and the lack of ground rules in determining the winner."

La Salle's men's team also dropped from second to fourth, while the women's team was relegated from second place to third.

"This will certainly have a lasting effect on the team, especially on Jonah," said Chua of the 20-year-old trackster who won the MVP awards the past two years. "If they have to make some changes they should have said it earlier."

Pampanga hosting 2 boxing tiffs

TWO World Boxing Council international championship bouts featuring four top-caliber Filipino boxers will be held tomorrow at the Bren Z. Guiao Convention Center in San Fernando, Pampanga.

Mixing it up in the main events are bantamweight champion Abner Cordero who will stake his title against Joel Juinio, and interim titlist Joel Avila, who goes against challenger Jhunver Halog.

The other main card in the event dubbed as "Thrilla in San Fernando," will pit Philippine featherweight championship between Baby Lorona Jr. and PBF feather titlist Samuel Duran.

WBC international lightweight champion and two-time WBC world contender Juanito Rubillar takes on Roel Pineda, while RP welterweight champion Rey Pelonia squares off with Richard Acaylar in the other supporting cards.

The event is presented by Elorde International Productions and the Association of Barangay Captain-Pampanga Chapter spearheaded by board member Rustico Maliwat.

Sponsoring the slugfest are Casino Filipino, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Lotus Garden Hotel and City Garden Suites.

Jungolf meet at Riviera on

RUSTY swings will be polished and old friendships rekindled when jungolfers, parents and alumni play the Langer course of Riviera Golf and Country Club today for the Anniversary tournament of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines.

Tee off time is 7 a.m. The 18-hole tourney is jointly put up by Jungolf, Adidas-Taylor Made, Riviera and patrons of the association.

Jungolf kids, most of them forced to cut down playing time due to their studies, start a long Christmas break by seeing action in the four age classifications—Classes A, B, C, D and E of the members event.

Jungolf chair Amalia Montecillo and president Merwin Mediana said they are inviting all alumni, including the touring professionals, of the organization to join the present jungolfers and their parents.

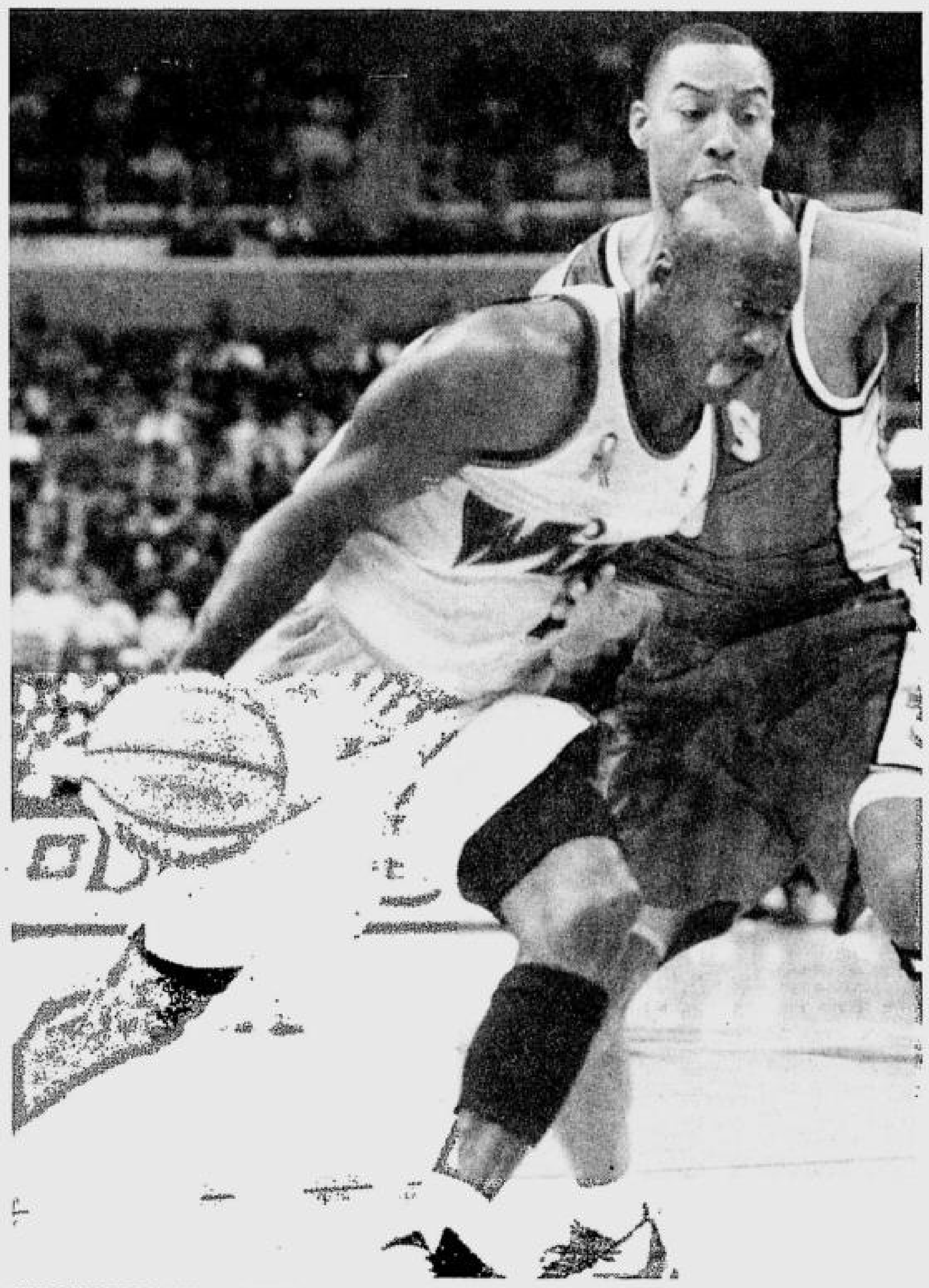
Trophies will be awarded the winners while a lot of raffle items will be given away during the awarding ceremonies which will also serve as the Christmas party of Jungolf where Mediana will reveal the Foundation's plans for the coming year.

Riviera has allowed Jungolf to use the Langer course for the Class A (15-17 years), Class B (13-14) and Class C (11-12) as well as the alumni and parents. The Class D (9-10) and Class E (8 under) will play in the executive course.

RACING TIPS

AT SAN LAZARO BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Aya's Star 2. Island King 3. Better King 4. Gangway 5. Pabuya
Race 2—1. Pacific Dancer 2. Shuttle's Rianne 3. Fiesta 4. Hingis 5. King Ram 6. Old Time Nevada
Race 3—1. Suterian Era 2. Houdini 3. Prince of Africa 4. Clear Sky
Race 4—1. Winning Rose 2. North Shine 3. Dear Elane 4. Ray Moon 5. Choice for Change
Race 5—1. Deputy Royale 2. Jessie James 3. Lorna 4. Man of the Hour 5. Green Buck
Race 6—1. Pinagpala 2. Carlo's Charm 3. Judicial System 4. Rain Check 5. Steel Wheel 6. Rackstar
Race 7—1. Point of Interest 2. Tanging Ikaw 3. Black Force 4. Sir Olizon 5. Busanda Strike
Race 8—1. River Bee 2.Gemstone 3. Tigra 4. Hacker
Race 9—1. Raise D Sun 2. Vinfa's Pride 3. Roulette Queen 4. Like A Prince 5. Triggerman 6. Turkish Delight



WASHINGTON Wizards' Michael Jordan (left) drives around Atlanta Hawks' Mark Strickland en route to the basket in the third quarter of their game at the MCI Center in Washington yesterday. Jordan finished with 23 points as the Wizards defeated the Hawks, 103-76, for their seventh consecutive victory. REUTERS

Wizards prevail again

WASHINGTON—Michael Jordan blistered former Chicago teammate Toni Kukoc and scored 23 points as the Washington Wizards beat Atlanta 103-76 Wednesday night for their seventh straight win.

It was the Wizards largest margin of victory of the season, and their 12-12 record is their first .500 or better mark this late or later in the season since they finished 42-40 in 1997-98. The winning streak is their longest since the 1995-96 season.

After a 1-for-6 start, Jordan finished 11-for-19 from the field and had six assists in just 27 minutes. He scored 18 points in the second quarter as the Wizards took a 49-33 halftime lead.

Shareef Abdur-Rahim led Atlanta with 20 points and 10 rebounds, and Kukoc had 19 points.

Celtics 104, Cavs 98

In Boston, Antoine Walker had 33 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists two nights after setting a record for shooting futility as Boston beat Cleveland.

NBA results:

Washington 103, Atlanta 76; Boston 104, Cleveland 98; Charlotte 94, Philadelphia 85; Orlando 98, Utah 90; New Jersey 117, Minnesota 112, OT; Toronto 102, Indiana 90; San Antonio 97, Portland 79; Seattle 104, Sacramento 92; Golden State 101, Detroit 88. *AP*

Batangas Blades 1st MBA champions on the road

By Roy Luarca

COACH Nash Racela could have his shoulder-length hair cut now. Reason: He had just steered the LBC Batangas Blades to the MBA national title.

Alex Compton, Romel Adducul and the other Blades could devote more time to their bible study now. After a physically draining series, they need spiritual upheaval.

Team owners Santi and Dino Araneta could afford to smile now. Their decision to blend former Manila Metrostars with the core of the original Blades had borne fruit. It was money well spent.

The Lipa City government headed by Mayor Vilma Santos Recto will reportedly honor the Blades with a motorcade and a plaque of appreciation today, after which a party would be tendered in their honor at the All Star 29 bar owned by Dino Araneta.

After the simple thanksgiving in Bacolod, including the traditional champagne soaking and tobacco smoking, more celebrations await the Blades.

Santi Araneta, also the chair of the Multi-Regional Basketball Inc., said the players and the coaching staff and their families would be treated to a vacation in Boracay plus, of course, cash bonuses.

In addition, each team member would receive a championship ring.Flashing their best form in the aborted best-of-five series, the Blades pulled away early and then thwarted the Slashers' repeated rallies to prevail in Game Four, 94-75, Wednesday night and capture their first MBA national championship since joining the league inaugurals in 1998.

That they downed the Slashers in Bacolod City made the Blades even more impressive as they became the first MBA team to clinch the national title on the road.

The Pampanga Dragons took the title in San Fernando in 1998, the Metrostars in San Andres in 1999 and the Andok's San Juan Knights in San Juan last year.

Like them, the Blades would have preferred to celebrate at home, where the atmosphere would have been more jovial and the fans more cordial.

Reception, not perception

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

AS I was about to write this piece, the phone rang. It was Putch Puyat, one of sports' gentlemen of the first order.

"Have you gotten hold of the latest issue of Time magazine?" he asked.

N'yet.

"Oh, well, I just had mine," he said. "And I'm so excited. Know why? Time devoted three pages to our very own, Bata Reyes. I'm so proud to be a Filipino, Al."

Bata Reyes, of course, is the world's Mr. Magician of billiards. Putch Puyat is Bata's mentor and benefactor.

The article comes on the heels of an occasion that will honor Bata Reyes on Jan. 12 as Male Athlete of the Year by the Philippine Sportswriters Association at the Manila Pavilion.

Here's a glass to the Filipino.

■

What's wrong with San Miguel Corporation owning four teams in the Philippine Basketball Association (San Miguel Beer, Purefoods, Pop Cola and Ginebra San Miguel)?

None at all I believe.

In fact, it can own all the 10 teams now playing in the league and everything will still be fine. This is a free country. You want to hold a tournament with all your teams playing in it, fine. You are not breaking any rule, right?

The PBA will be reduced to a mere inter-department tournament, you say?

In a sense, yes. But what's wrong with that? At the INQUIRER, we'll start our inter-department basketball tournament shortly. Nobody's raising a fuss. Everybody's raising their glasses in anticipation of another thrill-filled series.

A tournament's true test of success is public reception, not perception. The perception that the PBA will become a private playhouse of Danding Cojuangco because his SMC owns four teams will be just that—perception. What will matter in the end is reception: Will the public stop embracing the league with that kind of setup?

I doubt.

The just-ended Governors Cup was proof. The fans came even as the series started with SMC owning three teams—Purefoods, Ginebra and SMB.

■

Vernon Sarne, a fellow Beatlemaniac, called up to say he was flying to Hong Kong today to visit his wife, Mahalia, and first child, Astro.

"I'll buy in Hong Kong my Christmas gift for you," he said. "It's the latest issue of Rolling Stones magazine. George Harrison is on the cover."

Wanakosay, Vernon.

Pasay derby starts today

COCKERS converge at the Pasay City Cockpit as the "Pasko na sa Pasay 4-Cock Derby" gets going today at 1 p.m. with more than 140 fights on tap.

The blockbuster event hosted by pit manager Eric dela Rosa is a grand showdown of well-known aficionados from Ucap and NCA as well as derbyists from Pasay, Parañaque, San Juan, Pasig, Rizal, Cavite, Laguna and Bulacan.

"Just like in last July's PCC Anniversary Derby (156 fights), the derby will start at exactly 1 p.m. We have to start early because of the big number of fights," Dela Rosa said.

At stake is a whopping prize of P500,000 while entry fee is P8,800.

The "Pasko" derby is one of Pasay Cockpit's two major events every year. The other one is the Anniversary Derby that falls on the month of July. For more details, call 816-67, 843-1890 and 843-1746.

Roligon tilt Dec. 27

AFICIONADOS will be treated to exciting encounters with the holding of the Galleros de Manila 5-Cock Inaugural Derby at the Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque City on Dec. 27.

Sponsored by Ninja Game Fowl Feeds, this derby will be the year-ending battle of the titans in cockfighting among the members of the Ucap, NCA and Galleros de Manila.

For inquiries and cockhouse reservations, call Tiling or Fred at 833-16-38 or 833-22-75.

No less than 40 entries are expected to join this first of a monthly derby fully supported by the management of Roligon.

PBA dilemma

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

IS the Philippine Basketball Association fast becoming a "Liga ng San Miguel?"

"It's not true," said a league insider who refused to be identified. "Boss Danding (Cojuangco) is simply better than the others that's why San Miguel Corp. can buy all those teams. They do have the money."

Following the transfer of the Pop Cola franchise of RFM to San Miguel, SMC now owns four of the 10 teams in the PBA, almost half of the roster in the organization. Aside from Pop Cola, the other teams under its fold are Purefoods, Ginebra and San Miguel.

"It's looking monopolistic right now," Alaska owner and former PBA chair Wilfred Uytengsu was quoted as saying. "And we have to ask ourselves if monopoly is good for the league."

Uytengsu, who opposed the transfer together with outgoing chair Iggy Yenko of Talk N' Text, warned of the danger of having one company controlling too many teams in the pro league. SMC's latest acquisition of Pop Cola has already generated many whispers and many criticisms, giving Asia's first play-for-pay basketball tournament another black eye. "Another dark day for the PBA," a furiously angry Uytengsu was quoted as saying after last Monday's PBA Board of Governors meeting which approved the transfer by a 6-2 vote. He said that no one, (and if I may add, not even PBA Commissioner Jun Bernardino) could guarantee that there would not be games and situations in the future when the league's integrity would be cast under a dark cloud. He was worried over what the fans may think about the PBA now that "one company controls more than one team in the league."

The PBA can ill afford to lose the confidence of the public. It has already fallen on hard times, short of being in a state of distress, losing its luster and suffering from poor gate receipts during most games, including those played at the cavernous Araneta Coliseum where one can easily see rows and rows of empty seats. Is the paying public sick and tired of the PBA? What gives?

SPORTS ON TV

COMPILED BY LORENZO MANGUIAT

BASKETBALL: NBA Action at 9:30 a.m. (r – 8:30 p.m.) on ESPN

NBA—LA Lakers vs Houston Rockets at 10 a.m. (r – 9 p.m.) on ESPN

US NCAA—Tennessee vs Louisville at 1 p.m. on ESPN

GOLF: Davidoff Tour Review at 2:30 p.m. (r) on Star Sports

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1990, Purefoods beat Alaska Milk, 99-98, to win its first PBA Third Conference title at the Ultra. Also today in 1993, the Philippines defeated Japan, 15-0, 15-1, for a blazing start in the Hagedorn Cup International Sepak Takraw Championships in Puerto Princesa.

2001 NATIONAL OPEN CHESS TOURNAM

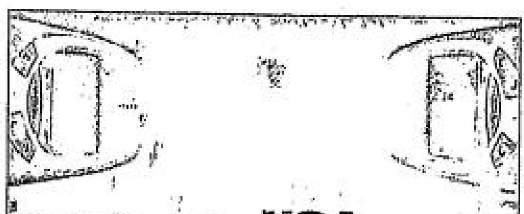
'PASKO CHESSFEST'

Lawyer Matias Defensor (seated, left) and Grandmaster Eugene Torre shake hands after making the ceremonial moves on Wednesday signaling the start of the NCFP Pamaskong Handog 2001 National Open Chess Team Championship at the SM Megamall. Witnessing the event are (from left to right) Jun Caldiratan, IM Rudy Cardoso, Gen. Art Carrillo, lawyer Sammy Estimo, GM Rogelio Antonio, Jr. and IA Gene Poliarco.

He's back!
And so are zed's NBA updates.

SPORTS

AL S. MENDOZA, Editor ▣ EDWIN M. VILLANUEVA, Assistant Editor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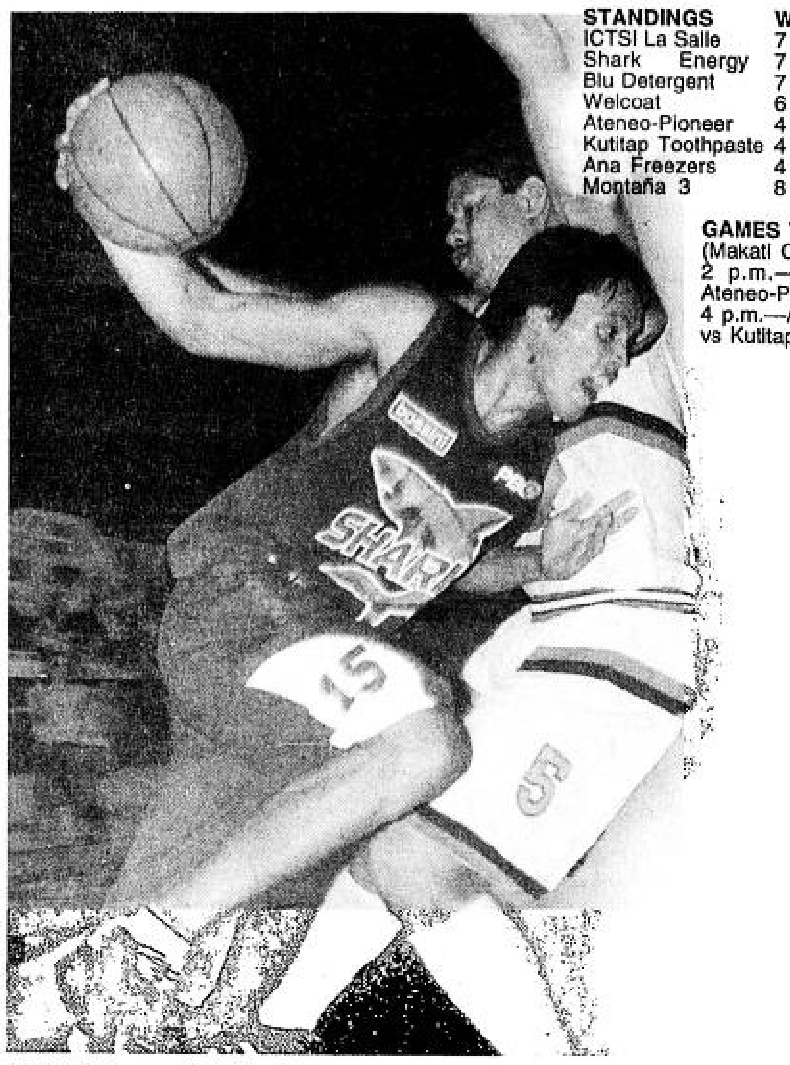
PBL CHALLENGE CUP

Shark shoots down La Salle



STANDINGS	W	L
ICTSI La Salle	7	3
Shark Energy	7	4
Blu Detergent	7	4
Welcoat	6	4
Ateneo-Pioneer	4	6
Kutitap Toothpaste	4	6
Ana Freezers	4	6
Montaña	3	8

GAMES TOMORROW
(Makati Coliseum)
2 p.m.—Welcoat vs Ateneo-Pioneer
4 p.m.—Ana Freezers vs Kutitap

SHARK Energy Drink's Gilbert Malabanan (left) drives against ICTSI-Archers' Willy Wilson during their PBL game yesterday at the Makati Coliseum. Shark won, 59-55.

BETOY JOHNSON

BY DENNIS EROA

FOXY playmaker Michael Robinson made the crucial plays as defending champion Shark Energy Drink snapped a two-game losing streak with a scary 59-55 victory over leader ICTSI-La Salle yesterday in the PBL Challenge Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

Later in the night, Blu Detergent Kings found an unlikely hero in power playing Abby Santos to edge Montaña Jewels, 86-83, and tie sister team Shark in second place at 7-4.

ICTSI-La Salle, which also lost to Shark in the first round, 64-58, continues to pace the eight-team field with a 7-3 record.

After ICTSI point guard Mike Cortez tied the ballgame with a crunching triple, 55-55, 1:04 remaining, it was the turn of the 5-foot-8 Robinson to take the spotlight.

Gilbert Malabanan's split off Willy Wilson's foul gave the Energy Drink Kings a 56-55 lead, and Robinson shocked the Archers when he stole the ball away from Cortez.

A former San Sebastian College stalwart, Robinson dished a pass to Malabanan, who missed but Chester Tolomia was quick for the follow-up, 58-55, 29 seconds remaining.

Blu was ahead by 17, 55-38, until a Mark Macapagal-inspired uprising enabled Montaña to come closer, 84-83, 58 seconds left. But the 6-foot-4 Santos, who was plucked out from the bench by coach Tony de la Cerna, followed-up a miss by Francis Sanz and iced his heroics with a huge defensive rebound following a Montaña miss.

SHARK 59—Castro 11, Malabanan 10, Tolomia 10, Cole 9, Basilides 6, Ortega 4, Ybañez 3, Rodriguez 2, Robinson 2, Caceres 2, Sotto 0.

ICTSI-LA SALLE 55—Cortez 14, Yap 8, Sta. Maria 8, Omolon 6, Wilson 6, Castro 4, Manalo 3, Cuan 2, Uy 2, Daep 2, Ramos 0.

Quarters: 10-9, 24-28, 43-42, 59-55

BLU DETERGENT 86—Bacani 19, Codamon 11, De la Cuesta 11, Billones 11; Santos 10, Legaspi 8, Quiambao 6, Kalaw 6; Roldan 4, Prior 0, Sanz 0.

MONTAÑA 83—Macapagal 20, Misola 13, Mesina 12, Alfad 11, David 9, Zamora 8, Gottenbos 4, Dimaunahan 4, Torrente 2, Lao 0, Gatumbato 0.

Quarters: 24-26, 53-38, 73-61, 86-83.

Hermoso Toyota champion

ROLAND Hermoso, one of the country's most successful race drivers, won the recent 2001 Formula Toyota Filipinas Cup.

He bested nine other racers in the 12-round series held at the Subic Raceways and Batangas Racing Circuit in his first try.

A member of the Petron Team, the 31-year-old bachelor has so far won 21 major awards in his almost 12 years of being in the sport of racing.

"I'm so lucky that I get the needed regimen before participating in any race and the generous support of Petron," said Hermoso.

On top of getting assistance from Petron, he cites proper concentration and enough physical and mental preparedness as the keys en route to a successful venture in car racing. He advised those who want to be in the sport to brace themselves for rigid preparations since this is the "ticket to a life in the fast lane."

"They have to put in mind that this is not a glamorous sport. If they want to be here, they should be ready to dedicate years of their life in preparation, *kung gusto nilang manalo*," he added.

Injured cagers worry Jacobs

AS the deadline to name the 18 PBA players in the national training pool nears, Asian Games head coach Ron Jacobs is in deep thought whether he will include players taking their time recuperating on the injured list.

"That is a big dilemma. I still don't know if I'll include them or not because these guys could create an impact on the team," Jacobs yesterday told the INQUIRER.

Centennial Asian Games campaigners Johnny Abarrientos and Kenneth Duremdes along with defensive ace Chris Jackson and Noy Castillo are hobbled by injuries that could hamper their stint in the national training pool.

"But if they get well before the Governors Cup, then there's a chance that they would be included," he said.

The PBA has given Jacobs until tomorrow to complete the 18 players allowed to join the training pool. Jacobs and PBA commisioner Jun Bernardino met yesterday but failed to arrive at a final decision.

"We are still debating on 2-3 guys but around 15-16 are already assured of slots in the pool," said Jacobs.

He declined to name the players on his wish list and the 2-3 cagers who are skating on thin ice.

Asi Taulava, Eric Menk, Danny Seigle, Danny Ildefonso, Rudy Hatfield, Dondon Hontiveros, Dennis Espino, Davonn Harp, Mick Penissi, Olsen Racela, Poch Juinio, Marlou Aquino, Patrick Fran, Paolo Mendoza, Jeffrey Cariaso, Castillo, Duremdes, Jackson and Abarrientos are strongly being considered to complete the 18 vacant slots for the PBA.

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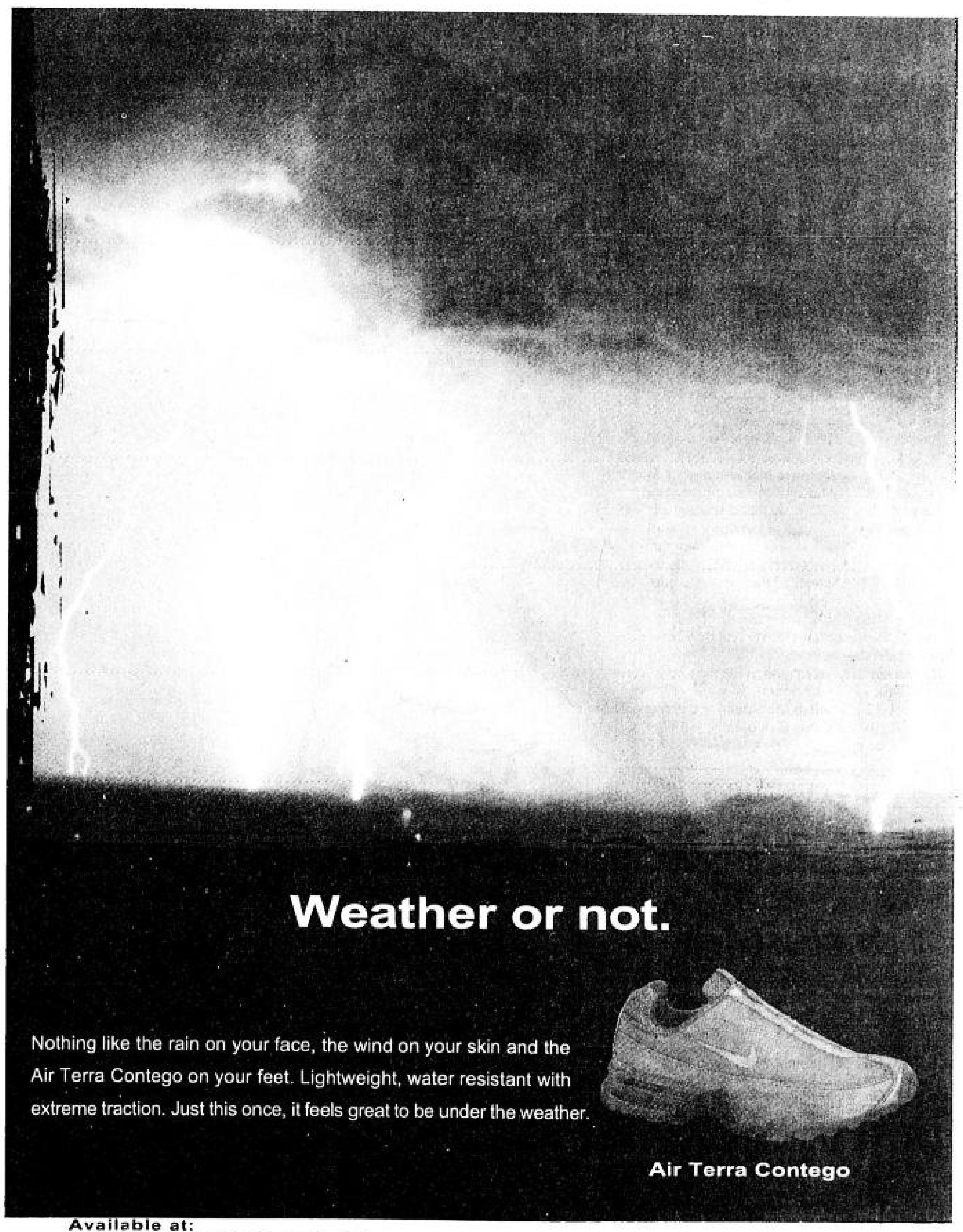
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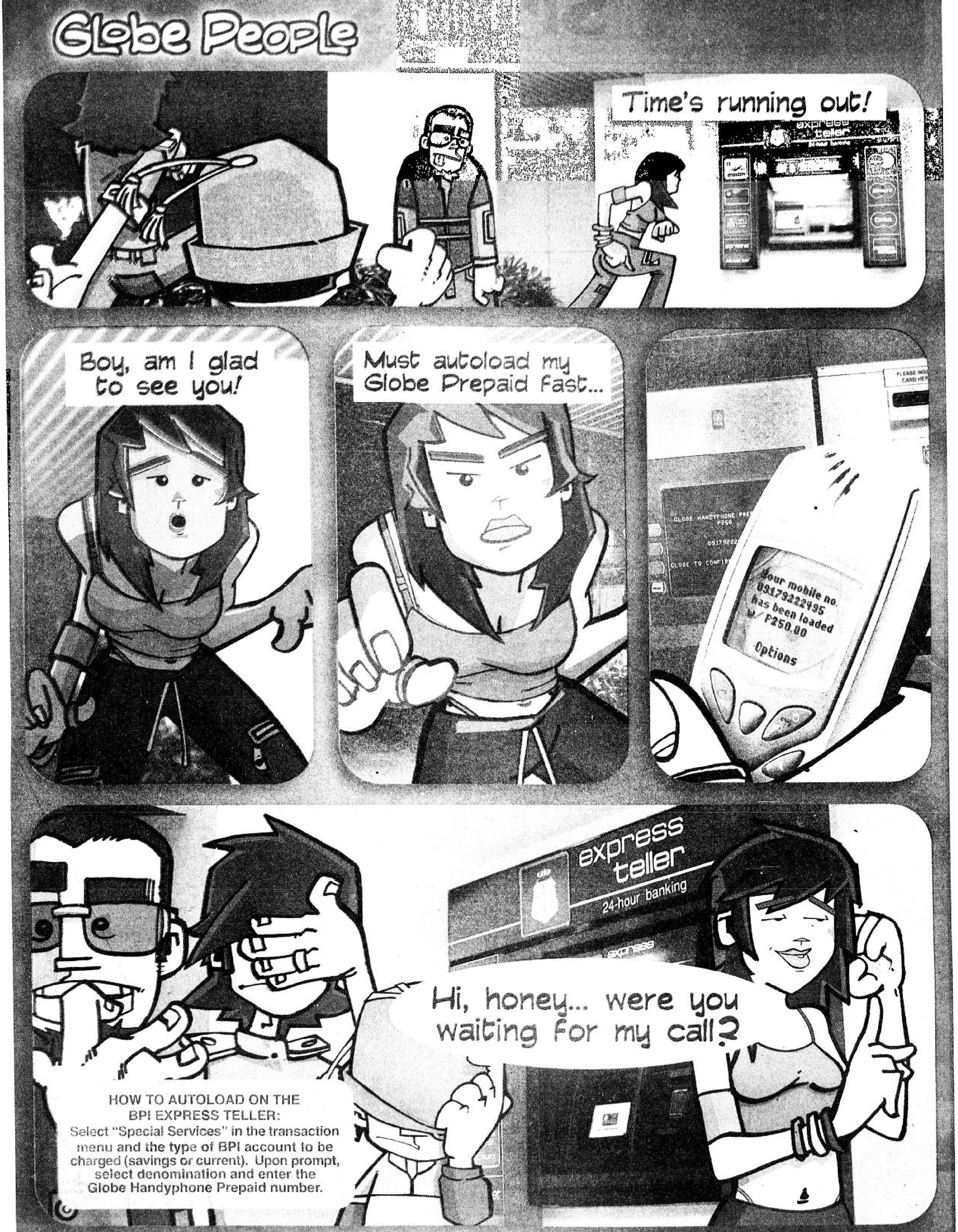
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NBI: Key to solving Nida murder is in the 'stars'

By Philip C. Tubeza

INSTEAD of looking at a rogues' gallery to help solve the murder of actress Nida Blanca, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) is looking at a gallery of show biz stars to help shed light on the actress' killing.

NBI spokesperson on Blanca's case Ricardo Diaz yesterday said the bureau would invite big name veteran stars like Annabelle Rama, Caridad Sanchez, Nova Villa, and Gina Pareño.

Pareño earlier went to the bureau, but she did not finish her sworn statement because she did not like the media publicity surrounding her visit.

But Diaz also emphasized that these veteran actresses are witnesses and should not be considered as suspects. He said the bureau is also planning to invite Blanca's coworkers at the Movie, Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB).

"We might take the sworn statements of Gina Pareño and possibly Annabelle Rama, who is close to Blanca, to help us in the investigation," Diaz said.

Diaz said the NBI might also invite comediennes Caridad Sanchez and Nova Villa, both close friends of the murdered actress, to "come over" and help in the investigation. Diaz assured that the bureau would try to make the interviews as comfortable as possible for the actresses.

"Even if they are busy, we can interview them in the place they choose. We might even interview them at a movie set if

NBI AIMING/ A27

RAMA

VILLA

PAREÑO

SANCHEZ

Former child actress Strawberry dies at 25

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE FORMER child actress known as Strawberry died yesterday afternoon at the Parañaque Medical Center, two days after she was caught in the middle of a violent traffic altercation in Las Piñas City.

Strawberry, Anouk Baldo in real life, was shot three times in the head and passed away yesterday at the intensive care unit of the Parañaque Medical Center.

But her boyfriend Mark Doromal, who stood out as the primary suspect in her death, still refused to come out from hiding and cooperate in the investigation, police said.

A staff member at the Parañaque Medical Center said Strawberry's family authorized doctors to pull the plug of her respirator. The staff member said Strawberry passed away between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. But according to GMA Channel 7 news, she died at 4:45 p.m.

Police have yet to determine if Strawberry was shot by men identified with her boyfriend Doromal, or by members of Raynaldo Picar's family.

The Picar family and Doromal's group figured in a bloody confrontation over traffic in BF International village on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, the Picars went to the station and admitted to police that they busted Doromal's car using baseball bats. But they denied they shot Strawberry during the altercation.

FORMER CHILD/ A27

Arming residents no answer to crime, says Manila dad

By Jerome Aning

MANILA is in danger of turning into a "Wild, Wild, West" if civilians are allowed to carry arms to defend themselves, their loved ones and their property against crime, warned the leader of the City Council's minority.

In a recent interview, Councilor Don Ramon Bagatsing of the fourth district said that the proposal to allow Manila residents to bear arms would only aggravate the peace and order problems plaguing the city.

"I foresee gun battles raging on every city street, very much like in the wild, wild, West, if this proposal is allowed," Bagatsing told reporters, referring to the old American West, whose early history was marred by violence and lawlessness among its settlers.

A majority councilor, Julio Logarta Jr. of the sixth district, recently filed a controversial resolution that would allow Manila's licensed gun owners to carry their firearms outside their domiciles.

Logarta also proposed that "barangay self-defense forces," composed of armed civilians, be created to help police scour communities and get rid of criminal elements.

Logarta said he filed the proposal because the police are allegedly not doing their job well enough. He cited two murders that took place in his district, as well as the increasing number of drug-crimes in the Manila.

But Bagatsing countered that the "cure is (to) reform the police." Although Logarta's proposal is "quite radical," Bagatsing said it would only add to the city's problems.

WAZZZZUP ?
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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TIA MARIA'S JUPITER ST., MAKATI CITY	SPAGHETTI D'BUMP	RETROSPECT DEC. 27 ☎890.4735
TIA MARIA'S REMEDIOS COR CAROLINA ST.	VERSE 2 FLIGHT/TOYZ	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎522-0429
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Sta. Lucia PBA title has all sorts of fathers

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

THE MANAGER of the Sta. Lucia basketball was extremely glad. Buddy Encarnado, a first-time father, threw a big party, raffled off gifts and stayed up with friends from the media until the wee hours of morning on Wednesday.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, he kept mumbling as he moved from table to table at the Fortune seafood house on UN Avenue

No need to say that Buddy, slimmer and younger, was very relieved.

But when it was his turn to explain their fine luck, he tarried, took a deep breath, before explaining something that had deeply bothered him all these years.

He had started to fear, he said.

He then likened the Sta. Lucia basketball team to a barren woman.

A woman, Buddy said without smiling, takes nine months from the moment of conception to give birth.

And the Sta. Lucia basketball team?

Well, it took nine long years before Sta. Lucia finally bore its first PBA championship.

Everybody laughed and nodded in agreement.

***

Maybe he was trying to exaggerate.

But there was no better way of detailing their many, many long years of patient waiting.

Buddy said they had done and tried everything.

In fact, not a few people had suggested that the Sta. Lucia Realtors could be disbanding, maybe last year, maybe this year.

Sta. Lucia, many doubters suggested, could quit at any given moment.

Now, with Sta. Lucia finally a champion, Buddy did not hesitate to say that all those who had predicted the team's disintegration had been grossly unfair.

The wait for the first crown, he said, could have dragged on for 10, even a dozen years. But they would have stayed on just the same.

Never in a single moment had it crossed their mind to give up the gallant glory chase.

***

Drinks, light beer and cognac, were poured, glasses clinked.

Then, this being an affair especially for harassed deadline beaters, it was inevitably asked: How did Sta. Lucia do it?

Buddy stood up, stared at the ceiling, and ticked off the names of coaches, a long line, who had tried and failed.

Nat Canson, Chot Reyes, Derrick Pumaren, Adonis Tierra, so and so, then Tierra again.

And, of course, Norman Black who won it for Sta. Lucia on his second year on the bench.

Black, who has flown off to California, deserves all the big credits.

But Buddy did not hesitate to confirm that the Governors Cup championship has many fathers.

Leading the sires, of course, is Exequiel "Exy" Robles, the low-profile Sta. Lucia Realty Corp. big boss who reluctantly took the traditional victory ride, his biggest, before being dragged bodily for a post-victory interview.

***

Let's see. Buddy Encarnado, Exy Robles, Norman Black.

The list of championship fathers, sounded hollow, incomplete.

Buddy wasted no time. Staring across the table, he pointed a happy finger at Alfrancis Chua.

Yes, Buddy was explaining, Norman Black was the key to everything.

But Black's partnership with Chua, who had been yanked out of luckless Tanduay, was the big turning point in their championship quest.

How? Buddy was asked.

Alfrancis made the Sta. Lucia team run, really long and hard, en route to the crown.

***

Oh, it was never easy, Alfrancis, in fitting black shirt and matching slacks, swore.

The players just hated him but the young, long-haired assistant coach said he stood his ground.

They ran, not out under the sun, but inside the gym.

You see, he said, jogging long hours would've been useless in the end. Because, in a basketball game, a player has to make short sprints, pause, and spurt again. Long runs are not needed.

The idea is to simulate the actual movements, get the exact groove, develop the necessary on-game muscles during training.

Chua, often seen out-shouting Black on the sideline, said he also made it a point for all the players to be able to clear the distance from the baseline to midcourt, in just four seconds.

And why the special regimen?

Because, Alfrancis bared, there was no way Sta. Lucia could have made it even to the semifinals had it been stuck with its hackneyed halfcourt game.

***

The idea was to cover the entire floor, in order to emphasize on the knife-sharp quickness and skills of their American reinforcement, Damien Owens.

Marlou Aquino also had to be roused from stupor. He had to work double time to be in championship shape.

There was no way they could have moved on, Alfrancis said, if Marlou did not cooperate and work himself back to shape.

As a result, Aquino was adjudged best player of the game at least six times.

Gerard Francisco, fully recovered from a leg bone fracture incurred last year, was a great revelation.

Then there was skipper Dennis Espino, easily the most outstanding local for the victors.

Yes, the championship had many fathers, including San Miguel's Danny Ildefonso.

Why? Ildefonso bagged the final conference best player award despite having performed miserably for San Miguel.

Needless to say, he ended up paving the way for Sta. Lucia's trip to the championship, mainly in the sixth game of the title series.

Repeat: Ildefonso, in failing his own team, could also be included among those who helped win Sta. Lucia's first PBA championship.

The feat, no matter how dubious, should help lend a hint of legitimacy to the conference best player award made possible by lazy, blind media voters.

Ildefonso himself said he did not deserve the PBA CBP award. Just the same, he is listed as an illegitimate father Sta. Lucia's first championship.

HOMELESS, BUT IN LOVE JOANBONDOC

This teenage couple eats, loves, lives in this wooden cart where they also dream of Christmas and bright lights of the New Year. But reality bites, and this meal, meager by most people's standard, is all they have on the day this picture was taken. Who knows what tomorrow will bring?

BI lawyer nabbed for extortion try

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation arrested an immigration legal officer for demanding P100,000 from a Filipina who wanted her Japanese husband to be stricken off the immigration bureau's watchlist.

The complainant's husband is a suspected member of the Yakuza and has been included in the Bureau of Immigration watchlist.

The NBI caught red-handed BI lawyer Reynan B. Perez, of Mapagkawanggawa Street, Teachers Village, Quezon City, just as he received the marked money from the woman he was trying to shake down, Amorlina A. Sakashita, of Macaria homes, Molino, Bacoor, Cavite.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said the complainant went to the immigration bureau on Dec. 12 to secure a permit for her husband, Akira Sakashita, to ehter the country.

Akira was denied entry into the country on Nov. 22 because of his inclusion in the watchlist.

BI officials referred Amorlina to the bureau's legal division. But when she met Perez, the suspect allegedly demanded from her grease money amounting to P100,000, Wycoco said.

The victim, with the help of a major TV station, sought the assistance of the NBI's Anti-Organized Crime Division.

Wycoco said Amorlina even provided the NBI with P20,000 in cash, which the NBI's Forensic Chemistry Division later marked with fluorescent powder.

She then told Perez to meet her at Max's Restaurant in Intramuros, instead of the BI building.

On Wednesday, Amorlina tucked coupon bonds between the marked money to make it look like she had P100,000 before she went to the restaurant.

NBI agents staked out at the restaurant pounced on the suspect as soon as he received the money from "under the table."

The arresting agents reportedly found the money in the front pocket of Perez's pants.

The suspect was later charged before the DOJ with direct bribery and for violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, December 21, 2001
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: *Song 2:8-14*
Gospel: *Lk 1:39-45*

Mary then set out for a town in the Hills of Judah. She entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with holy spirit, and giving a loud cry, said, "You are most blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! How is it that the mother of my Lord comes to me? The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby within me suddenly leapt for joy. Blessed are you who believed that the Lord's word would come true!"

Commentary

These days readings from the Gospels have some elements of a fairy tale. Their candor, their innocence and their simplicity make us smile. The meeting of the two women, plus Elizabeth's baby leaping in her womb, gives us a taste of a children's story. Let us not forget however, that they are two very real and tough women. One has been disgraced by her sterility suffering social ridicule within the context of their cultural milieu. The other experiences motherhood, but in a new and mysterious way. These are two women who have learned how to trust in the Lord. Lucky are you Mary and Elizabeth, for you have believed and taught us the meaning of faith.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE)—Remedies available to defendant—*Lina v. Court of Appeals* (135 SCRA 637, 642 [1985]) discussed the remedies available to a defendant declared in default, as follows: (1) a motion to set aside the order or default under Section 3 (B), Rule 9 of the Rules of Court, if the default was discovered before judgment could be rendered; (2) a motion for new trial under Section 1(a) of Rule 37, if the default was discovered after judgment but while appeal is still available; (3) a petition for relief under Rule 38, if judgment has become final and executory; and (4) an appeal from the judgment under Section 1, Rule 41, even if no petition to set aside the order or default has been resorted to. These remedies, however, are available only to a defendant who has been validly declared in default. Such defendant irreparably loses the right to participate in the trial. On the other hand, a defendant improvidently declared in default may retain and exercise such right after the order or default and the subsequent judgment by default are annulled, and the case remanded to the court of origin. The former is limited to the remedy set forth in Section 2, paragraph 3 of Rule 41 of the pre 1997 Rules of Court, and can therefore contest only the judgment by default on the designated ground that it is contrary to evidence or law. The latter, however, has the following options to resort to this same remedy to interpose a petition for *certiorari* seeking the nullification of the order of default, even before the promulgation of a judgment by default or in the event that judgment has been rendered, to have such order and judgment declared void. In prohibiting appeals from interlocutory orders, the law does not intend to accord executory force to such writs, particularly when the effect would be to cause to irreparable damage. If, in the course of trial, a judge proceeds without or in excess of jurisdiction, this rule prohibiting an appeal does not leave the aggrieved party without any remedy. In a case like this, a special civil action of *certiorari* is the plain, speedy and adequate remedy. Herein respondent controverts the judgment by default, not on the ground that it is unsubstantiated by evidence or that it is contrary to law, but on the ground that it is intrinsically void for having been rendered pursuant to a patently invalid order of default. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Panganiban, Indiana Aerospace University v. Commission on Higher Education [CHED], G.R. No. 139371, April 4, 2001]

Digest by R.B. Vera

CIDG man hunted down

By Philip C. Tubeza

MEMBERS of the Western Police District (WPD) are hunting down an alleged member of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) suspected of killing a 19-year-old fish vendor in front of his girlfriend outside a Tondo nightclub.

Roberto Selada, said to be a member of the CIDG, allegedly shot dead on Monday night Steve Xavier C. Morales, of Area D, Parola Compound, Tondo, Manila outside the Larose Videoke Bar and Restaurant, also in Tondo, said investigator SPO1 David D. Tuazon, of the WPD homicide section.

Police said Morales died from three gunshot wounds in the body after he was brought to the hospital.

Morales was with his friend Joanne Castro, 19, of 116 Pier 6, North Harbor in Manila when he was shot about 11:25 p.m. on Monday, police said.

Investigation showed the two were walking outside the restaurant when Selada suddenly appeared and punched Morales on his face. Selada then pulled out a handgun of unknown caliber, and, in front of the shocked Castro, shot Morales three times in the body, then escaped on a motorcycle, police said.

Castro tried to save Morales and took him to the Andres Bonifacio Memorial Hospital where he died despite the doctors' efforts to save him.

Selada is now the subject of a police manhunt.

Makati bent on raising business taxes

BY ALCUIN PAPA

THE MAKATI City government is bent on raising business taxes even as it recently increased real estate taxes in the premier city.

Makati Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado and the city council's presiding officer announced on Tuesday that the city's council is holding two public hearings on a proposed ordinance "revising" the city's tax rates for business establishments.

The increase in business taxes would depend on the type of business and would be by as much as three percent of gross receipts for one year of a business establishment. "Makati became a chartered city in 1995, but the city government has not raised its taxes and the prevailing tax rates remain at the level of a municipality," Mercado said.

He said that the city's local government services and compensation for its workforce have long been upgraded to fit Makati's city status.

"The revenues to be generated from the adjustment will be earmarked for new schools and learning facilities, health and nutrition services, and (for) maintenance of the quality of services for city residents and the private sector," Mercado said.

The city has not adjusted its rates for business taxes since 1993 when the Makati Revenue Code took effect, according to City Secretary lawyer Rogelio Marasigan. But since Makati became a city in 1995, it was time for an adjustment of the city's taxes, he said.

"For a good nine years, the taxes have been at the level of the municipality. It's time to adjust the tax rates as a city," Marasigan said.

Another reason for the increase, Marasigan said, is the need to fund the "high level of services in education, health, waste and environmental management and the infrastructure that have been expected by Makati residents. If we don't attend to this, we will be behind."

As to criticism that the increase might be "untimely" in light of the economic situation, "residents have had their good time (when there was no increase)," Marasigan said.

"I think we shouldn't paint the economy so badly," he observed.

Lim-Atienza feud caused Mehan mess, says councilor

BY JEROME ANING

THE MEHAN Gardens controversy is not about a struggle to preserve history and cultural heritage. It's about the old political squabbling between Mayor Lito Atienza and former Mayor Alfredo Lim and their supporters.

The majority leader of the Manila City Council made this allegation on Thursday, saying that he believes the mayor would never bow down to the opponents of the construction of the Park N Ride complex and the new campus of the City Colleges of Manila in the 140-year-old Mehan.

In an interview, Councilor Marlon Lacson of the second district claimed that many of the conservationist and environmentalist groups opposed to the projects are associated with Lim, one of Atienza's staunchest political critics. Lacson said the retention of the nearby two-hectare Arroceros Forest Park is the "real agenda" of the projects' opponents and not the preservation of the Mehan Garden. He declined to identify Lim's allies, whom he said were on the opposite side of the Mehan dispute. But he said that the former mayors' allies "know who they are."

Atienza yesterday said the new City Colleges of Manila would be constructed on the Mehan Gardens after six months of negotiations for an alternative site with the Department of Tourism yielded nothing.

"I have called them and wrote to them, but my efforts were in vain," Atienza said. And we can't wait any longer because our students need a new campus soon."

The Intramuros Administration, which is under the DOT, has ruled that the old Ateneo de Manila building on Anda corner Arzobispo Streets could not be an alternate site for the CCM. The old Ateneo is the subject of a contract of lease between the agency and the Renacimiento Inc. for the purpose of reconstructing the building and turning it into a world-class hotel, according to the IA. The contract was executed on Feb. 18, 2001 and covers a 25-year period, renewable for another 25 years, said IA's legal services director Evelim Cajigal.

The IA also said another proposed alternative site, the Cuartel de Sta. Lucia, is the subject of a court-approved compromise between the agency and the Offshore Construction and Development Co. Cajigal said the use of the two properties is "not legally feasible" and that the IA might be taken to court for breaching its contractual undertakings.

City Hall has contended that the Mehan was not a historical place, and Atienza is apparently sticking to this belief. Despite opposition to his projects on the Mehan and alleged links to former mayor Lim, who is said to be supporting the opposition, Atienza has remained undaunted.

Lim and Atienza, who were former allies, became estranged in 1992, when the former ran unsuccessfully in the 1992 presidential elections and the latter was elected as city mayor. Lim accused Atienza of undoing many of his reforms in Manila.

City Hall has recently renewed efforts to reclaim the park, located on the Pasig's southern bank just below the Light Rail Transit Central Terminal on Antonio Villegas (formerly Arroceros) Street, from its current administrator, Winner Foundation.

The city government bought the lot from the Land Bank of the Philippines in the early 1990s, when Lim was mayor. But Atienza, who was then vice mayor and presiding officer of the Council, now insists that the lot was originally intended for the city public schools and teachers. He said the lot was bought with the money of the Department of Education-Manila, which had planned to erect its own building on the site. DepEd-Manila is currently housed in a cramped office at the City Hall's fourth floor.

"The Mehan is last frontier of Lim's allies; they know that if the city government retakes the Mehan, their forest park is next," Lacson said. "They wanted the park for their own, even if it belonged to the teachers, who have every legitimate right to use it."

Lacson said the memorandum of agreement that created the park, which Lim and the Winner Foundation signed, is questionable. He stressed that the MOA did not cede the lot to the environmental group.

Winner, Heritage Conservation Society, Mother Earth Foundation, Earth Savers Movement, and other private groups have joined the National Historical Institute, National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and the National Museum and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in opposing City Hall's projects on the Mehan. The groups have argued that the Mehan was declared historical in 1934 and could not be disturbed, as provided by two presidential decrees. But city hall maintains that the park was never a historical site and that the Park N Ride parking facility was not within the current boundaries of the Mehan.

Lacson also repeated Atienza's statement that no trees will be touched if ever the new CCM buildings are constructed on the Mehan. Trees that would be on the way would be replanted.

"The same policy will be applied when the DepEd-Manila office is built on the forest park, so the environmentalists will have no reason to worry at all," he explained. "What the city government is interested in is to reclaim its legal property."

In case of the CCM, the buildings will be constructed on Mehan's fringes so that the archaeological digging could begin anytime in the middle portion of the future campus, Lacson said.

The INQUIRER tried to reach Winner head Regina Roces-Paterno for comment, but her cell phone was off at press time.

But Tina Testa, a city-based conservationist, denied Lacson's claim and said the fight to preserve the Mehan is apolitical. She added that the other councilors who support Atienza's position "are so bigoted and don't know a thing about cultural heritage preservation."

Former child actress dies at 25

(From page A25)

They also volunteered to undergo paraffin tests to prove that they did not fire any sort of weapon recently.

Strawberry's father, Oscar Baldo, yesterday said he wondered about Doromal's "unusual response" to the incident.

Doromal, whose father reportedly owns Combat Security Force, refused to cooperate with police despite the fact that it was his girlfriend who was shot, Supt. Armando Pineda, Las Piñas investigation chief, told the INQUIRER Wednesday.

"It was very unnatural," Baldo said. "If he didn't have anything to hide and if he's not guilty, he should have helped my daughter, brought her to the hospital, and cooperated in the investigation."

Baldo said he was told that Doromal, accompanied by a lawyer, would go to the National Bureau of Investigation yesterday.

"Even then, he doesn't have to wait for a lawyer, if he only wants to tell what really happened...if he's innocent," Baldo said.

Doromal failed to appear at the NBI headquarters yesterday.

Baldo said Strawberry was supposed to introduce to him her new boyfriend, Doromal, on Sunday. They did not show up, he said.

That same night, Strawberry, Doromal, and their other companions had a heated argument with Raynaldo Picar. It turned out that the headlights of both their cars were in bright mode.

On Tuesday, Doromal's group chanced upon Picar's Mercedes Benz van (UPE-328). On board were Picar's wife and son, investigation showed.

Doromal's group, among them was Strawberry, allegedly chased the van, but were kept at bay when the Picars proceeded to their village and asked the security guards not to allow Doromal's group to enter, police said.

Doromal's group later invited the Picars to talk at a nearby clubhouse. But the Picars were surprised to see armed security guards in the vicinity, Picar's wife said in a television interview on Wednesday.

According to police, when the violence started, Strawberry was on board her Mitsubishi Lancer, and tried to flee from the scene, but two unidentified men blocked her path and started firing on her car. Police recovered spent shells of a 12-gauge shotgun and a .9mm pistol, Supt. Pineda said.

NBI: Key to solving . . .

(From page A25)

that is necessary," he said. "They are witnesses who would shed light on questions regarding the possible motives (of the suspect)," he added.

The NBI has broadened their investigation on Blanca's murder after receiving flak that it was focusing too much, and was allegedly already prejudging three personalities very close to Blanca-her husband Rod Lauren Strunk, longtime aide Elena dela Paz, and friend Candelaria Tantoco.

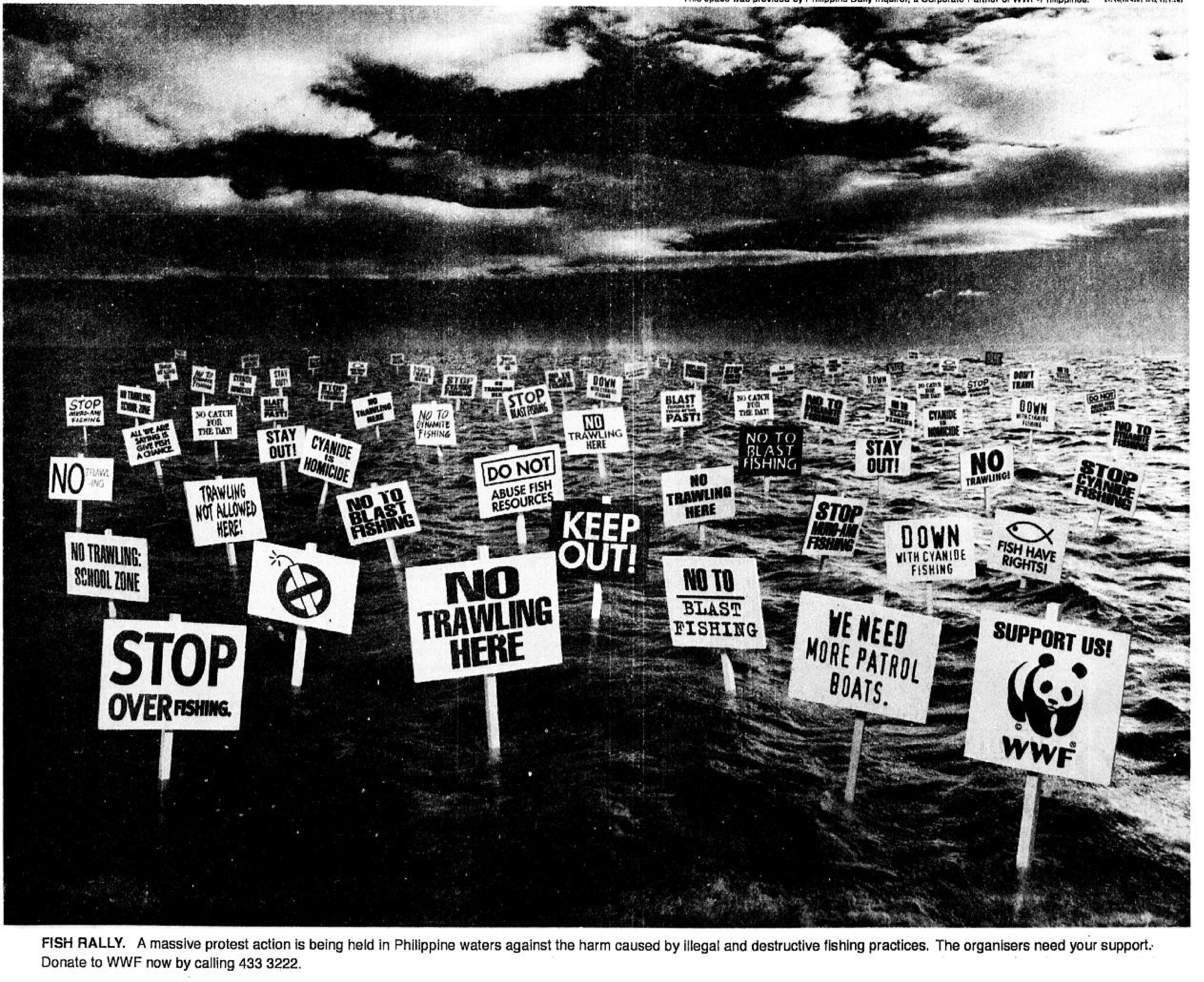
But Diaz said the bureau began this current phase in the investigation after a security guard of the Atlanta Centre building in San Juan where Blanca's body was found inside her car in the building's parking lot told investigators he saw Blanca at the lobby shortly before her disappearance.

Earlier, an elevator operator also told the NBI that Blanca got off from the elevator on the sixth floor where Blanca parked her Nissan sedan.

Diaz explained that the guard's statement could mean that somebody "close to Blanca" fetched the actress. Blanca was supposed to go to a wake of her friend Bong Eraña at Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati.

Diaz also revealed that the bureau now has several leads in the disappearance of businessman Mike Mártinez, who was earlier linked to Blanca's killing after police tagged him as the middleman between Blanca's husband Strunk and alleged killer Philip Medel Jr. Diaz was abducted on Nov. 19 near his house in Parañaque.

This space was provided by Philippine Daily Inquirer, a Corporate Partner of WWF-Philippines. PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER



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Lamangan all praise for his latest 'take-one' actress

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Leah Salterio

DIRECTOR **Joel Lamangan** knows a good actress when he sees one. He's handled several actresses in the past and he could tell if the female star has a future in the highly competitive acting arena.

Joel is also notably critical of young talents, but when he is impressed with one, he is very generous with praise.

In his latest film, "Hubog," Joel gets to work for the first time with sexy, young actress **Assunta de Rossi**, whom he says is a "revelation."

"She gives what you want," says Joel of Assunta. "She can easily comprehend intellectually and emotionally what you want her to do."

Joel describes Assunta as a take-one actress. "She just stands there and receives instructions, then when it's time for the cameras to grind, she gives everything, all in one take. She's like **Nora (Aunor)**, **Vilma (Santos)**, **Lorna (Tolentino)** and **Maricel (Soriano)**.

"I have not seen such kind of performance from our young actresses today. Assunta has a mine of talent and emotions which you can easily dig up if you want her to act. She was able to show it in this film."

His latest actress also doesn't complain, according to Joel.

"I was reminded of the young **Jaclyn Jose** or **Glydel Mercado**," he says. "I handled her (Assunta) before in an episode of 'Larawan' on GMA with **Gina Alajar** and she held her own."

Joel says he didn't think twice when the offer to direct Assunta in a movie was presented to him by Regal Films matriarch **Lily Monteverde**.

"The casting came first, then I called in **Roy Iglesias** to do the script," Joel grants. "The script of 'Hubog' was already polished from day one. I didn't have to change anything. Besides, if I need Roy, he's always very accessible. He even goes to the set."

The director and writer are also the tandem behind TV's legal drama, "Your Honor," which stars **Richard Gomez** and **Eric Quizon** on ABS-CBN.

Joel considers "Hubog" one of his most important films, like "Muling Umawit ang Puso," "Warat," "Sidhi," "Bulaklak ng Maynila" and the award-winning bio-pic of Flor Contemplacion.

The theme of "Hubog," Joel's 25th film, is serious: the exploitation of the poor by the rich, politicians, authorities and the poor themselves.

FORMER actress Shyr Valdez (right) and business partner Marissa Saludo pose with their eBookMan.

Despite the many problems plaguing local cinema, Joel faces the coming year with enthusiasm. He's raring to direct his next project, be it drama, action, comedy or period flick.

From acting to business

REMEMBER **Shyr Valdez**? The name certainly rings a bell. Shyr, the former teenage star who kicked off her show biz career in **German Moreno**'s "That's Entertainment," is now visible again.

This time, though, Shyr is not out to display her acting talent, which merited a best supporting actress trophy for the movie, "Bulaklak ng City Jail." In the said dramatic film, which was an entry to the Metro Manila Film Festival, Shyr won the Catholic Mass Media Award for her convincing portrayal of a juvenile delinquent.

Shyr, whose real name is **Cecille Cobarrubias**, now tries her hand at business. With a partner, **Marissa Saludo**, Shyr markets the high-tech handheld gadget, eBookMan.

Marissa heads Booklight, a five-year-old company which took over Alemar's Bookstore. The new company is the local reseller of eBookMan, in partnership with First Convergent Communication (FCC), the exclusive distributor of the product.

Shyr left show biz in 1986 after winning an acting award for "Bulaklak ng City Jail," where she pitted acting talents againsts **Nora Aunor**. The Cobarrubias decided to move to the United States, where Shyr studied fashion designing.

In 1991, however, Shyr returned to the Philippines and got a movie offer opposite **Bong Revilla Jr**. in "Maganto: Leon ng Maynila." She was also seen in the comedy flick, "Charot," which starred **Roderick Paulate**.

Shyr, whose name was inspired by Hollywood actress **Cher** who is a favorite of her mom, believes she took her business sense after her mother, former film and record producer **Cherry Cobarrubias**.

"Ten years ago, my friends asked me where I see myself 10 years later," Shyr recalls. "I told them, I imagine myself with my own company, holding a briefcase, taking the elevator to the penthouse and when I enter my office, everyone will say 'Good morning.' Now, I can see the realization of my dream.

The eBookman is available in a very handy size which has a proprietary operating system. It uses a multi-media card which can store up to 64 mega bytes of memory.

Shyr explains eBookMan is not a cellphone, a computer or a CD player. But it is capable of storing data. You can also download MP3 and enjoy your favorite tunes.

"It's not only for techie people," she informs. "I'm not a techie person. I don't even know how to open a computer. But I find my eBookMan very useful.

"If you have something really good and nice, don't you want others to have the same? We want to share the knowledge we get from this gadget and help lower the illiteracy rate of the country."

A number of people who have seen eBookMan note the gadget is very much similar to the Palm Pilot.

"It's better than Palm Pilot," Marissa beams.

If you buy an eBookMan, you get free eBooks reference package, like the Merriam and Webster Dictionary, the Holy Bible and even the Koran, according to Shyr.

"We've also converted Constitutional laws into the gadget," Shyr offers.

For literary buffs, there are choices from the 10 greatest novels of all time, including "Pride and Prejudice," "Wuthering Heights" and "Scarlet Letter." Over 12,000 titles are also in audio books.

Here's more. eBookMan has a recorder, built-in speaker, microphone and headphone jack.

Janice de Belen, for instance, uses the voice box to record a song she hears on Wave 89.1 while in transit.

"If I don't know the title of the song, I can just record it so when I get to Tower Records, I'll just play it and look for the CD," Janice shares.

For orders or inquiries, call the eBookMan hotline at 724-1887.

For more information about the product, visit the website at www.ebookstoreplus.com.

DIRECTOR Joel Lamangan (center) poses with his "Hubog" stars: (from left) Wendell Ramos, Assunta de Rossi, Jay Manalo, Alessandra de Rossi.

Wide appeal of game show

VIEWERS who have made "The Weakest Link" a regular viewing fare on primetime rejoiced when the game show returned on the air last week, after briefly being cut off.

"The Weakest Link," hosted by **Edu Manzano**, stopped airing after GMA 7 filed an injunction against the program. GMA claimed it had a prior verbal contract with the foreign franchise holder of the game show.

But Viva TV, which airs "The Weakest Link" in the Philippines, reportedly made an appeal for the game show to resume its airing despite the pending court case.

Like its predecessor ("Who Wants To Be a Millionaire"), "The Weakest Link" has become a habit for most local viewers. Since "The Weakest Link" serves as a post-programming of "Millionaire," the former instantly had a captive audience.

But today, "The Weakest Link" no longer hitches its wide appeal on its predecessor. Thousands of viewers across the country enjoy the format of the game show, which airs Mondays to Fridays, 9:30 p.m. on IBC 13.

Edu's unique hosting style of poking fun at the contestants with his wisecracks also helped increase the viewership of "The Weakest Link."

Even sitcoms spoof "The Weakest Link." I watched a teaser of "Home Along da Riles" on ABS-CBN, where comedienne **Nova Villa** was doing an Edu Manzano, complete with the trademark wink as she says, "Goodbye."

Meanwhile, watch the Christmas episode of "Millionaire" on Dec. 25, where megastar **Sharon Cuneta**, Sen. **Juan Flavier** and sexy actress **Rufa Mae Quinto** vie for the P2-million cash prize by answering the questions.

However, 50 percent of their winnings will be donated to their favorite charities.

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December 25	12NN - 9PM	12NN - 8PM		12NN - 9PM
December 26-30	10AM - 9PM			10AM - 9PM
December 31	10AM - 8PM			10AM - 9PM
January 1	12NN - 9PM	12NN - 8PM		12NN - 9PM

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Oyoboy still not ready to go full-time into show biz

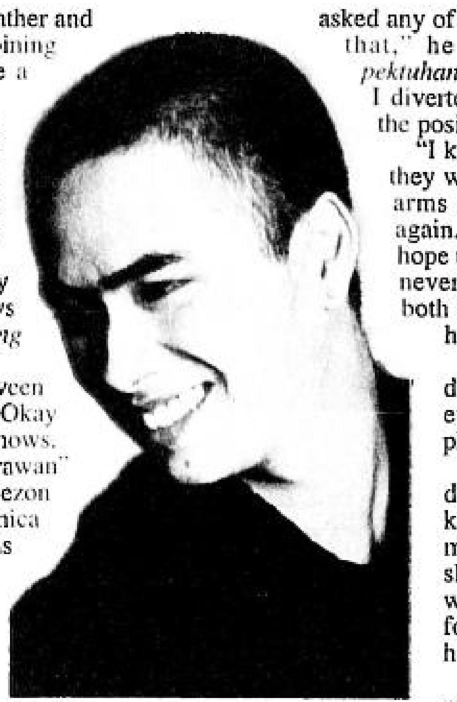
IF you have Vic Sotto as a father and Dina Bonnevie as mother, joining show business will only be a matter of course.

Vittorio "Oyoboy" Sotto, the only son of the famous couple, has gotten his feet wet since he was 12 when he started appearing on various TV shows.

"Nothing serious, merely guesting appearances," he says "Trip *lang dahil palagi akong isinasama sa* studio."

He constantly hopped between the sets of "Eat Bulaga" and Okay Ka, Fairy Ko," his father's shows.

At the set of GMA's "Larawan" somewhere in Terra Pura, Quezon City, Oyoboy and sister Danica were taping the final Christmas episode, "Media Noche" with mom Dina.



THIS Sotto prefers action and comedy roles.

Show biz families are featured in the drama anthology for the whole month of December. The episode they were taping on the Monday night that we visited the set was the first one in which Dina and her two grown-up kids would appear together. Their special guests in this episode, which would air on Dec. 26 at 10 p.m., were Joel Torre and Mathew Mendoza.

Oyoboy gave us a glimpse of the story.

"Mom is a single mother who devoted her time raising us. One day, our dad comes home and wants to spend his remaining days with his children. He is a cancer victim and about to die. We welcomed our father with open arms and that's when mom started to rebel," he explains.

Does Oyoboy resent growing up in a broken family? Was he traumatized by the situation?

"I knew something was wrong but I never asked any of them why things were like that," he says. "*Siyempre, naapektuhan din ako kahit papaano,* but I diverted my thoughts always on the positive side.

"I kept on hoping that one day they will be back in each other's arms and we would be united again. For years I clung to that hope until I realized that it might never happen. Anyway, seeing both of them happy makes me happy already."

Oyoboy says he never felt deprived of his father's love even if Vic had not been physically present.

"My dad is the most understanding person I've ever known," he reveals. "He may not be demonstrative in showing his affection, but we know and feel he cares for us. I can always count on him for moral support."

But when Oyoboy has a personal problem, he says he would rather confide to his mom because "my dad seldom gives advice." Vic, says Oyoboy, merely listens.

Here are a few things we learned about Oyoboy: He's a Capricorn, born on Jan. 12. He's 17, doesn't smoke and drinks purely for social reasons, but only a beer or two. Now in third year high school at Marymount, Oyoboy says he considers himself to be an average student. But he admits that he can lose his temper if he is provoked, although he claims he's not a war freak.

If he goes full time in show business, Oyoboy says he prefers doing comedy and action roles. He says he is a homebody and is always in front of his computer or the TV to watch tapes.

Ogie live at Enchanted Kingdom

SINGER-SONGWRITER Ogie Alcasid topbills Enchanted Kingdom's series of holiday performances at the Launch Pad, the world-class theme park's new concert venue.

Billed "Ogie Live at EK," the two-hour pre-Christmas presentation will have Asia's Nightingale Lani Misalucha as special guest on Dec. 22.

Repertoire includes Ogie's first hit song "Nandito Ako," and his other compositions like "Dito Sa Puso Ko," "Kung Mawawala Ka," "Bakit Ngayon Ka Lang," "Sumayaw Sumunod" and "Pangako."

For a true feel of the Christmas Season, the singer gets sentimental with hit songs like "Pasko Na Sinta Ko" and "You're All I Want for Christmas."

"Ogie Live at EK" will have Tats Faustino as musical director. Show time is 6:30 p.m.

Tickets to the show are at P300 (also includes admission to the park, plus unlimited access to the Grand Carousel); P450 (includes SuperSaver 10 ticket where one gets unlimited access to 10 pre-selected family-friendly rides); and P550 (includes one ride-all ticket).

For inquiries call 830-2111 to 17 (Makati) and 843-6073 to 78 (Laguna).

Veritable anthology . . .

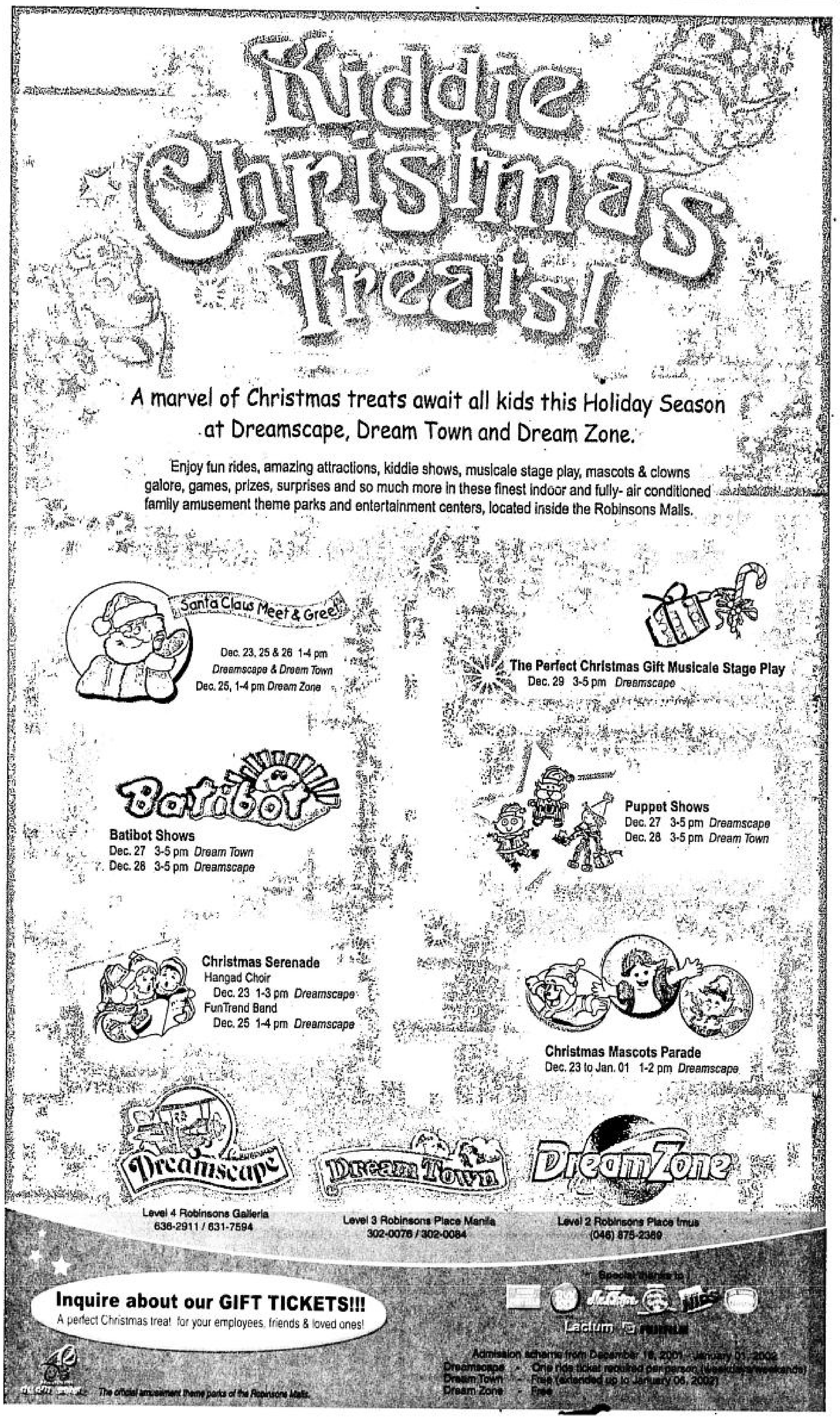
(From page A31)

It Be" by Lisa Dy and **Chat Zamora**; "What You Are to Me" by **Reuben Laurente** and **Markel Luna**; "Tayong Dalawa" by **Trina Belamide**, and "Sandcastle" by **Patty Mayoralgo** and Babsie Molina.

Note that quite a number of these songsmiths are performers in their own right—Moy Ortiz, Janno Gibbs, Jingle Buena, Arnold Reyes, Babsie Molina, Viktoria and Reuben Laurente. This gives Regine's new album an edge because these singer-composers have a knack for knowing which songs would suit a performer like her, and register strongly with listeners.

"Reigne" is Regine's first studio album in two years, after "R2K," which hit multi-platinum status. Next came the soundtrack album for the Regine-**Robin Padilla** movie, "Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw," which also clicked with audiences.

Regine is currently shooting a new film, "Hanggang Ngayon" with **Richard Gomez**, and she's also singing its theme song, penned by **Ogie Alcasid**, who also did "Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw."



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Dec. 29 3-5 pm Dreamscape

Batibot Shows
Dec. 27 3-5 pm Dream Town
Dec. 28 3-5 pm Dreamscape

Puppet Shows
Dec. 27 3-5 pm Dreamscape
Dec. 28 3-5 pm Dream Town

Christmas Serenade
Hangad Choir
Dec. 23 1-3 pm Dreamscape
FunTrend Band
Dec. 25 1-4 pm Dreamscape

Christmas Mascots Parade
Dec. 23 to Jan. 01 1-2 pm Dreamscape

Dreamscape
Level 4 Robinsons Galleria
636-2911 / 631-7594

Dream Town
Level 3 Robinsons Place Manila
302-0076 / 302-0084

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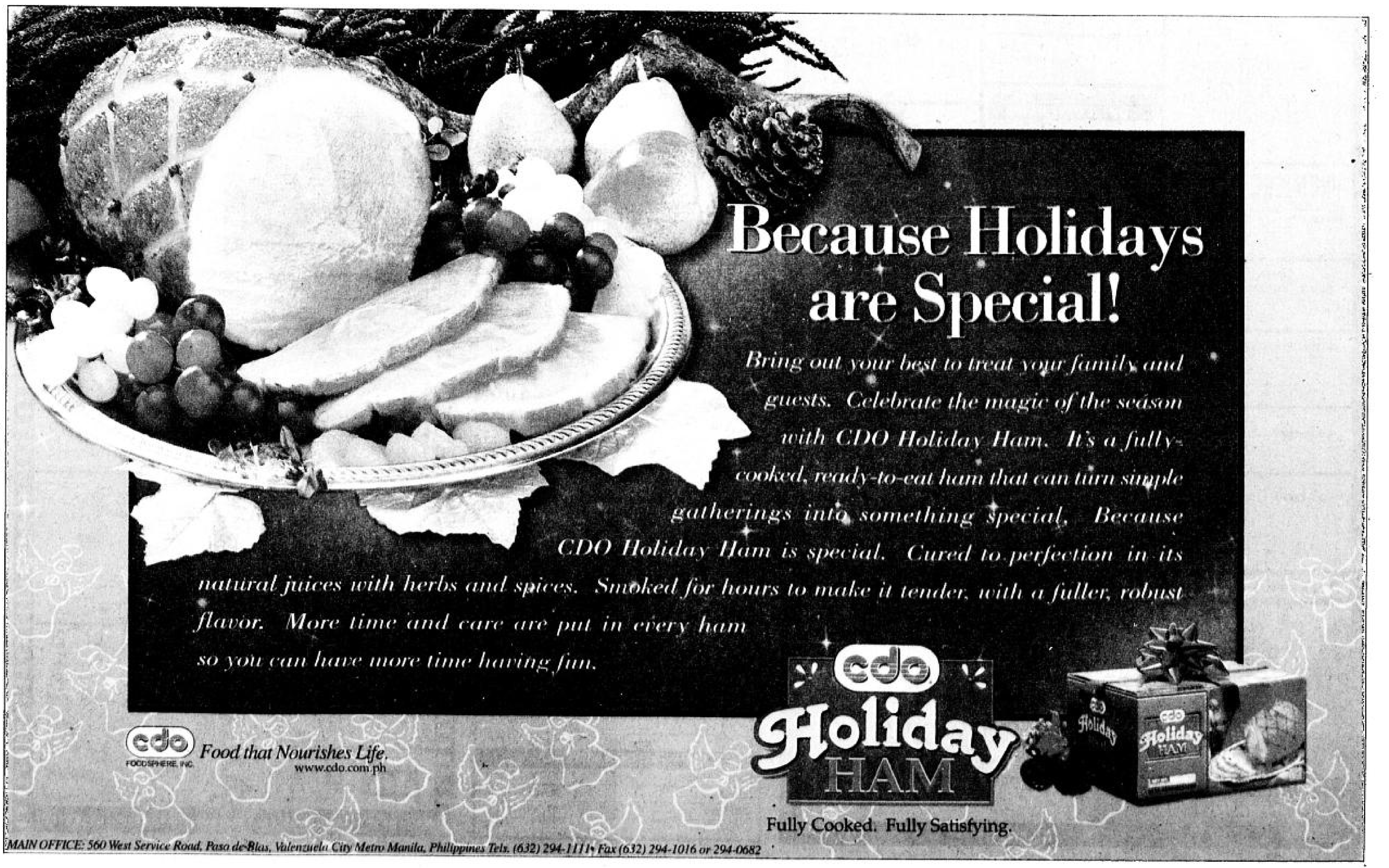

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GLORIETTA 4

1	MONSTERS, INC.	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
2	THE SCORE	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	SUMMER CATCH THX	In DSD/SDDS/DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	BEST OF CINEMANILA 2001 Art Film	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	MVP: MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE	In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
6	HARRY POTTER	In DTS/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
7	ROCKSTAR	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

GREENBELT

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3	THE SCORE	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	MONSTERS, INC.	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	HARRY POTTER	In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

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4 GOLD (DTS)	ROCKSTAR
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	THE SCORE
6 GOLD (SDDS)	SUMMER CATCH
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	CAPT. CORRELLI'S
8	SERENDIPITY
9	EARTHQUAKE
10	WOLF GIRL

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1	
2	
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4	
5	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
6 (DTS)	
Golden Pearl THX	

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2	TALONG
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7	RESERVE
8	RESERVE

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A	ALIPIN NG TUKSO

Sunshine
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3	RESERVE
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9 (DOLBY)	HARRY POTTER

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3	DALAWANG PISNGI NG LANGIT
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7 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
8	RESERVE
9	RESERVE

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7 (DOLBY)	HARRY POTTER
8	RESERVE

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4	RESERVE
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2	SUMMER CATCH
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4	WOLF GIRL
5	EARTHQUAKE
6	MUSKETEER
7	HARRY POTTER
8	MONSTERS, INC.

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3	SUMMER CATCH
4	MUSKETEER
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5	HARRY POTTER
6	ROCKSTAR

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ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	HARRY POTTER
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-5 (DTS)	EARTHQUAKE
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-6 (DOLBY)	MVP
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-7 (DOLBY)	SUMMER CATCH
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FARMERS PLAZA-2 (DOLBY)	PISNGI
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NEW FRONTIER	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
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EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
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ODEON	EARTHQUAKE
ODEON-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
ROBEN	PISNGI
TANDEM-1	SEX MEDUSA
TANDEM-2	SEX EDUCATION
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ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	CLOSED
ACT-4	CLOSED
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CINEMA-2	THE MUSKETEER
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	ROCKSTAR
CINEMA-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
CINEMA-3	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	THE SCORE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	MONSTER, INC
CINEMA-6	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
CINEMA-7	SUTLA (RI)
CINEMA-8	PISNGI
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	SUMMER CATCH
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	EARTHQUAKE
CINEMA-12	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
CINEMA-14	MUSKETEER
CINEMA-15	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
LORES	
CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-3	CLOSED
POWER PLANT CINEMA	
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CINEMA-2	MONSTERS, INC
CINEMA-3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-4	SUMMER CATCH
CINEMA-5	RUSH HOUR 2
CINEMA-6	THE SCORE
UNIWIDE METROMALL	
(LAS PIÑAS)	
CINEMA-1	
CINEMA-2	
CINEMA-4	
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Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ENTERTAINMENT

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

Cruise back in familiar territory in 'Vanilla Sky'

NEW YORK—"Vanilla Sky" is nearly identical to the 1997 Spanish film it's based upon, except it's set in Manhattan instead of Madrid and has a much better soundtrack.

In fact, the music is so perfectly chosen and plays such a huge role—as it does in all of Cameron Crowe's movies—that it's as if the former rock music writer burned a CD of his favorite tunes, then found a movie to remake to go along with it.

The presence of songs by Paul McCartney and Peter Gabriel, Jeff Buckley and Todd Rundgren, R.E.M. and Radiohead is one of the few personal stamps that writer-director Crowe placed on his adaptation of Alejandro Amenabar's thriller, "Open Your Eyes."

It's disappointing that Crowe didn't do more to make the movie his own, because his movies—namely "Jerry Maguire" and "Almost Famous"—are almost flawless.

"Vanilla Sky" is just as maddening as the original, forcing viewers—along with the main character—to wonder what's a dream and what's reality, who's alive and who's dead.

All that confusion would be fine if there were a payoff. But the ending is such an unoriginal, sci-fi cop-out, it's the most frustrating part of all.

Crowe excels, though, at drawing touchingly human portrayals from his actors, and "Vanilla Sky" is no exception. Tom Cruise gives one of his best performances, and Penelope Cruz does her best English-language work yet in the same role she played in Amenabar's original.

Cruise is back in familiar territory here as David Aames, a rich, swaggering playboy who runs the magazine publishing empire he inherited from his father. All sparkle and no soul, he clearly needs to be taken down a notch or 12.

Women flock to him, but he refuses to be faithful to any of them—certainly not Julie (Cameron Diaz), a friend and frequent bed buddy. All of that changes at his birthday party, where he meets Sofia (Cruz), who's there as the date of his best friend, Brian (Jason Lee).

When Julie crashes the party and stalks him, David keeps her at bay by chatting and flirting with Sofia, and is instantly hooked. He goes back to Sofia's apartment and spends a magical—though chaste—night with her.

As he's leaving the next morning, he finds Julie waiting for him outside, offering to drive him home and hop into bed with him. But in a jealous rage, she tells him she loves him, scolds him for using her for casual sex and plunges the car off a bridge in Central Park.

This is where things get tricky. David may have survived, but suffered irreparable facial damage. Julie may or may not have died in the crash. And Sofia may not exist at all—she may just be an imagined version of his ideal woman.

David tries to sort it all out in flashbacks with a psychiatrist (Kurt Russell) while sitting in the psychiatric ward of a prison, where he's being held on suspicion of murder. He wears an eerie mask to hide the scars that ruined his perfect face and that enormous, blinding smile.

Despite his movie-star status, Cruise doesn't take the easy way out: He allows himself to look hideously misshapen after the car crash. But the transformation in his character is even more powerful. David swings from depression to animalistic rage and back again, and his torment is the centerpiece of the movie.

Performances from the supporting players are equally strong, notably from Lee as David's insecure, lovelorn best friend—he laments, "You're rich and women love you. I'm from Ohio and I'm drunk"—and from Diaz, who shows a depth and a pain we've not seen before.

There's also some beautifully striking visual imagery, notably the opening sequence in which David runs frantically through an abandoned Times Square, and a scene in a dance club in which he wears his mask on the back of his head, making it appear that he has two faces.

And David's apartment, which appears to take up an entire floor of the Dakota building, is a marvel of interior design—pop culture iconography and stunning art work sit alongside breathtaking Central Park views.

"Vanilla Sky," a Paramount Pictures release, runs 136 minutes. *AP*

TOM Cruise gives one of his best performances and first-time leading lady Penelope Cruz does her best English-language work yet.

A new thrill and an ultimate reward

KRIS AND TELL

Kris Aquino

I'D like to apologize for again having missed my deadline for Monday's column. I'm sure all of you have been equally harassed with the Christmas rush. In my case, it's been non-stop advanced taping sessions for "Game KNB." We'd tape Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, normally finishing between 2-3 a.m., that's why my Saturday deadline wasn't met.

Allow me a few self-serving paragraphs. I was at Hi-Top Supermarket the other night buying the drinks for my staff's Christmas party. The supermarket had two wall-mounted TV sets, and as soon as I entered the store I noticed that they were tuned to "Game KNB."

The other shoppers asked me if we were on replay and I had to explain that the shows are pre-taped on the weekend before airing.

Our party was going to be held in Tagaytay and while on our way to C5, I noticed that all the buses with TV sets on Edsa and Meralco Avenue were also tuned to "Game KNB."

This is a new thrill for me. "Today with Kris Aquino," which was my morning show for more than four years, was always done live. "The Buzz" is also aired live.

Since we're in the studio, I never had the chance to witness people tuning into my program. Seeing those bus-loads of people craning their necks to get a better view of the TV, and because there was traffic, anonymously observing the viewers so involved with the fate of my studio player, literally brought on tears of joy.

It was a difficult, sometimes painful journey for us to make it to where we are now. In our first month, I felt that in the eyes of so many critics and columnists, my show and my hosting were incapable of doing anything right. Seeing first-hand that people are watching and enjoying a program that we've invested heart and soul to making work, is at the end of it all, the ultimate reward!

Patterson's latest

I JUST finished reading **James Patterson**'s latest, "Violets are Blue," the follow-up to last year's No. 1 best-seller, "Roses are Red."

"Violets are Blue" is again headlined by Patterson's most famous character, Detective Alex Cross, who was played by **Morgan Freeman** in the films "Kiss the Girls" and "Along Came a Spider," which were also based on his early works.

Mondays are my no-talking days. My mom always thinks that I'm sick since I'm asleep for at least 15 hours, not rising from bed until mid-afternoon. I've explained to her that my body needs to re-charge after non-stop tapings followed by going live on "The Buzz." Sleep, I realize, is an ultimate luxury nowadays, but it really works wonders in rejuvenating me.

I don't know if it's psychological, but Origins Sensory Therapy "Sleep Time" on-the-spot gel and "Sleep Perchance to Dream" pillow mist help me get an uninterrupted sleep.

After my night-time shower, I also slather on AromaFloria "Sleep Ease" Phytobody lotion. I also take a cup of chamomile tea before retiring.

I've written in the past that I'm a believer and practitioner of aroma and herbal therapy. If you're having trouble sleeping, then my rituals might be of help.

"Violets are Blue" depicts a lot of gruesome deaths, and "vampire-cult" rituals, but I never felt that these scenes were gratuitously included. The violence is integral to the plot and character development.

I'm a die-hard Patterson fan, that my opinion is clearly biased, but there are many that I've converted (like **Zsa Zsa Padilla, Boy Abunda**'s assistant **Bettina Aspillaga**, and my "Buzz" executive producer **Louie Andrada**) who all agree that James Patterson is such a skillful writer and when you read other authors who write the same genre, you tend to miss his fast-pacing and unexpected plot twists.

Wednesday viewing

WEDNESDAY nights are the best for TV viewing! I'm now addicted to CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) on AXN, 9 p.m., with a repeat telecast at 1 a.m. This series is as exciting and intelligent as James Patterson's thrillers, and the investigative process, as well as the show's narrative, make for compelling TV-viewing.

Locally, you have to give "Your Honor" also on Wednesdays on ABS-CBN, after "Whattamen" a viewing. The program stars **Richard Gomez** and **Eric Quizon**, directed by **Joel Lamangan**.

It's an excellent, well produced, thoroughly researched legal drama, further enhanced by the superbly convincing acting of Richard and Eric.

Scripted by **Roy Iglesias**, "Your Honor" makes the intricacies and idiosyncracies of the Philippine legal system understandable to us laymen.

Veritable anthology of stereotypes

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

FREDDIE Prinze Jr. usually stars in creditable movies, but he stumbles badly in "Summer Catch," a really messy production even for a youth-oriented film of this sort. So many clichés are mixed together in this flick that it could serve as a veritable anthology of teen and young-adult film stereotypes:

First, poor boy loves rich girl. Prinze falls for not just any rich girl, but for the daughter of the man who owns the huge summer house in Cape Cod whose lawn is tended by Prinze and his father.

Second, Prinze wants to become a big baseball star and it looks like he could do it, because he's a great pitcher—but the better-heeled members of his team look down on him, so he loses the will to really excel.

Third, his family and *barkada* believe in him and try to keep his spirits up, but he continues to be a loser—until his rich girlfriend goes against her father's wishes and gives up her own future for him.

Fourth, the movie has so many baseball scenes for young and macho viewers that it neglects its other, equally important elements.

Fifth, even more time is frittered away on sexual hi-jinks performed by the movie's randily youthful characters—and never mind if they're standard, kneejerk and predictable.

Sixth, old Mrs. Robinson is given another trot around the park as she reappears in the person of a hot, middle-aged deflowerer of virginal youth.

Seventh, smart-alecky or fatuous lines pepper this movie's script in silly alternation, sappy dialogue that makes the characters here sound like reincarnations of the cute cretins in "Gidget Goes Hawaiian."

Eighth, the adult characters are uniformly typified as dolts, making the "sensitive" kids the only A-Ok people in this fantasy world—with the exception of Prinze's utterly obliging dad.

Ninth, the young goons' infractions are blithely overlooked and forgiven, like the razing of the press box adjoining the baseball field, which in the real world would have gotten the young arsonists in serious trouble.

Tenth, one big, slap-happy ending coming up, with our young hero getting the girl, the town's approval, the fat pro-baseball contract—the works!

Now, if only life were so obliging, illogical and dumb . . .

Singer-songwriters pen new tunes for Regine

REGINE Velasquez feels really lucky to have been able to record some exceptional new songs for her latest album, "Regine." They include the carrier single, "To Reach You" by **Lisa Dy** and **Chat Zamora**; "Love on the Airwaves" by **Chris Thompson**; "This Time" by **Yman Panaligan**; "Nasa Puso by **Moy Ortiz** and **Edith Gallardo**;

"Dadalhin" by **Tats Faustino**; "Free Spirits" by **Noel Mendez**; "Long for Him" by Lisa Dy; "Sa Aking Pag-ibig" by **Janno Gibbs**; "Perry's Will" by **Jingle Buena** and **Arnold Reyes**; "I Know" by **Babsie Molina** and Edith Gallardo;

"My Destiny" by **Toto Soriso**; "Bukas Sana" by **Mario Borje** and **Raymund Marcaida**; "Nang Makita Ka" by **Viktoria**; "Let You Be" by Toto Soriso; "Could

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SUMMER CATCH - P 13 12:50, 3:20, 5:40, 7:55, 10:10	RUSH HOUR 2 - P 13 12:45, 2:55, 5:05, 7:15, 9:30	THE SCORE - R 18 11:40, 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00

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A Filipino teenager dies mysteriously in West Side Avenue, Jersey City. A Jersey City police detective, who is also a Filipino, investigates the case.

During the course of the investigation, the detective discovers dark secrets of the Filipino community. More important, the kid's story - as told be his friends, relatives & witnesses - becomes a conduit towards the detective's eventual confrontation of his dark past: he was a military torturer during the Marcos years.

The film is about the Filipino soul. It is about confronting, critiquing & examining their dark & troubled past, especially the brutal Marcos years. This is the only way they, as people, can move forward.

AWARDS:
Best Actor Award to four actors: Joel Torre, Yul Servo, Arthur Acuña, and Ruben Tizon CINEMANILA 2001
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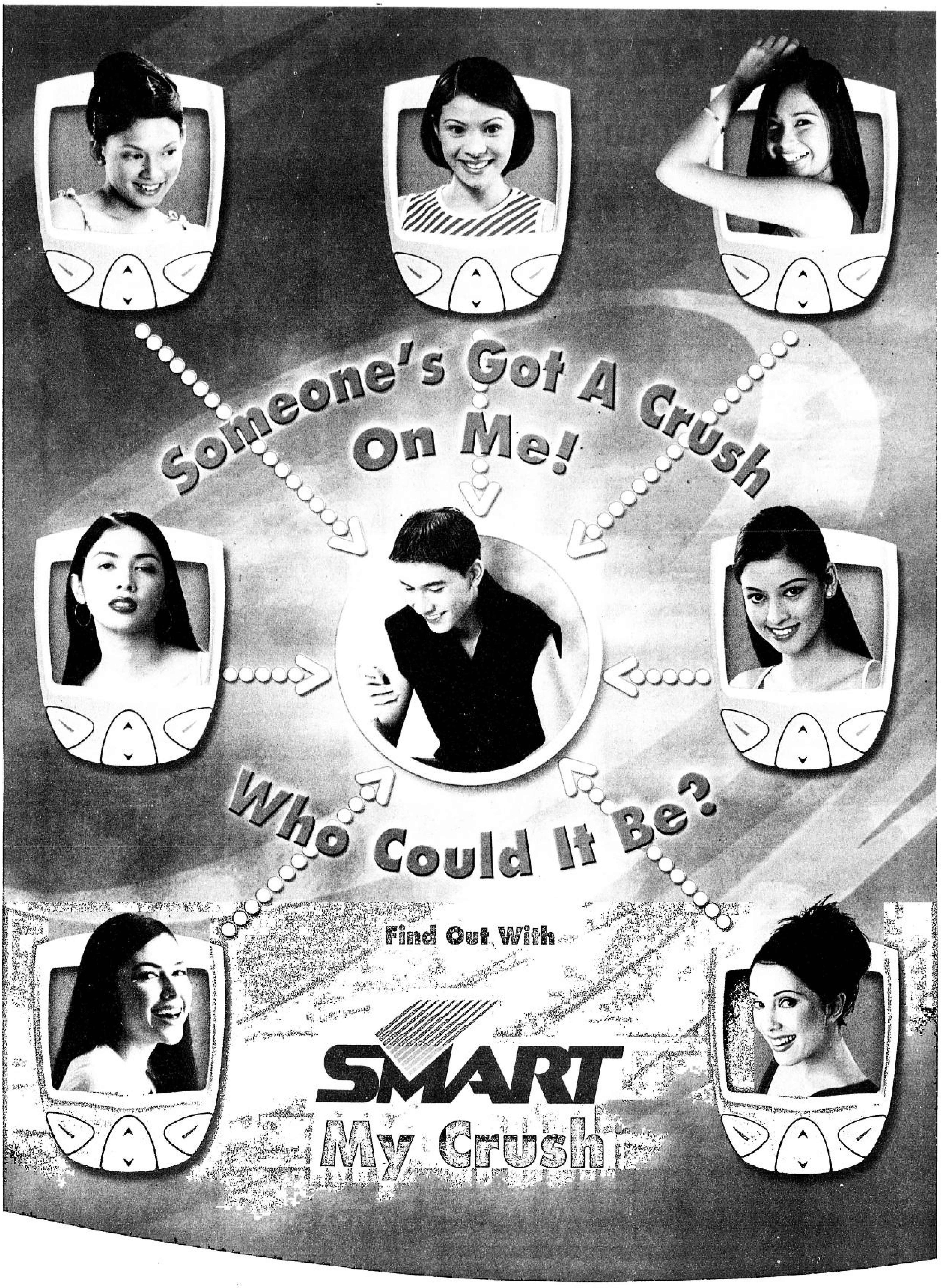

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BUSINESS

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Gov't, Tan sign agreement on PNB

BY ELENA R. TORRIJOS

THE GOVERNMENT and taipan Lucio Tan signed late Wednesday night a term sheet for the rehabilitation of Philippine National Bank.

The two shareholder groups will execute in 30 days a memorandum of agreement to make effective the provisions of the term sheet.

The MOA, which will be effective for five years, will provide for the conversion of approximately P7.8 billion of the government's outstanding P23.9 billion in loans to PNB into equity or into tier 2 capital, convertible bonds or convertible preferred shares, at P40 per share with the concurrence of Tan.

The tobacco magnate reportedly controls through proxies the legal majority of approximately 68 percent of PNB.

The debt-to-equity conversion will effectively bring up the government's stake from 16.58 percent to 44.98 percent or equal to Tan's diluted stake.

In line with the conversion, the government will enter into a joint sale agreement that will allow the government to sell at any time and at any price a controlling block of not less than 67 percent together with attendant warrants and shares of Tan.

Tan will have the right of first refusal over the government's stake.

In an interview, Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. president Norberto Nazareno said the MOA would not require the government to sell its stake before the end of five years or any other time period.

"We don't want to force ourselves within a time period because then it might be seen as a fire sale and we will not be able to command a good price," Nazareno pointed out.

"We are confident in five years the bank will be turned around and the market will be favorable for us to do what we originally intended, which is to totally privatize PNB through a joint sale of at least 67 percent," he added.

However, he admitted that both groups would go on their own once the MOA expires at the end of five years from the date of signing.

While the MOA will also provide for management sharing and control between Tan and the government, this will also be effective until the agreement's expiration in five years.

Under the term sheet, the basis of the MOA to be signed, the government will nominate four directors to PNB's 11-member board for the position of chair of the board, the executive committee members including the president and deputy general counsel.

Tan will nominate the general counsel, deputy chief financial officer and assistant corporate secretary in addition to its four board nominees.

The government and the Chinese-Filipino businessman will draw up a shortlist of candidates for the corporate secretary and chief financial officer, respectively.

Also under the term sheet, the government will offset up to P10 billion of its outstanding P23.9-billion emergency loan to PNB with loans of various government agencies that have become past due.

The balance of the P23.9 billion loan or approximately P6.1 billion will be extended to a term of 10 years at a spread of one percent over the 91-day treasury bill rate.

The agreement between Tan and the government will also require a quasi-reorganization of PNB's capital from a par value of P60 per share to P40.

The rehabilitation of PNB is seen as necessary to preserve the stability of the banking system.

Currently the country's sixth biggest lender, PNB has been suffering heavy losses because of the burden of servicing the P25-billion emergency loan it secured from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and PDIC last year.

A little over half of every P1 in loans extended by PNB had gone sour and its capital base has been eroded by losses from interest cost and high loan-loss provisions.

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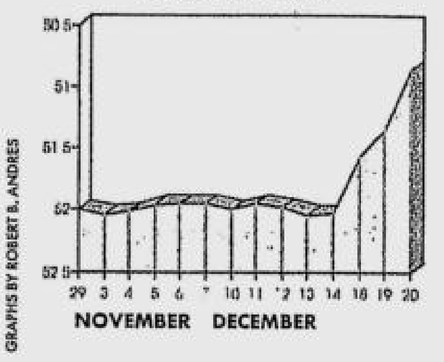

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As of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 20, 2001

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Dec. 20, 2001

STOCK MARKET

Shares up 1%

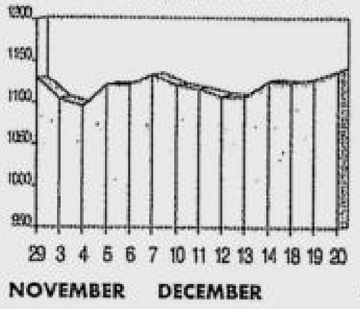
SHARES ended higher yesterday, buoyed by demand for select blue chips, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index ended up 10.46 points, or one percent, at 1139.87, adding to Wednesday's 0.4-percent gain.

"The market was up on demand in select blue chips like SM Prime," said BPI Securities assistant vice president Spencer Yap.

Traders said the market may have drawn support from the 0.7-percent gain of the Dow Jones Industrial Average Wednesday and positive domestic corporate news. *AP*

PSE Composite Index



(See stock market report on Page B4)

Lehman commits to buy $1-B bad loans of RP banks

BY CLARISSA S. BATINO

FOREIGN financial group Lehman Bros. has committed to invest $1 billion in the Philippines by buying some of the soured loans of locally operating banks once the law that would provide incentives to asset management companies has been passed.

The plan was disclosed by Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura during an economic briefing led by President Macapagal-Arroyo at the central bank yesterday.

Buenaventura said Lehman had informed him of the planned investment to help the local banking system reduce its non-performing loans.

As of October, the bad loans of the country's 44 commercial banks had swelled to P291.38 billion from a month-ago level of P281.826 billion while total loans had declined to P1.549 trillion from P1.572 trillion.

NPLs are accounts whose interest or principal had not been paid for three consecutive months, and the rising level of bad loans reflected the inability of individuals and corporate borrowers to service their loans following an economic slowdown since the financial crisis in 1997.

Lehman is the second foreign group to commit funds for the NPL reduction program, next to American group Cerberus Ltd., which has promised to infuse $1.5 billion to buy bad loans and housing mortgages in the Philippines.

"The 18-percent NPL ratio is intolerable and this is why we are pushing for the AMCs and also for banks to start lending aggressively and to increase their capital," the central bank chief said.

LEHMAN/ B6

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The art of corporate gift giving

LABOR MANAGEMENT FORUM

Josephus B. Jimenez

HR, as the corporate function always relied on to exercise social responsibility for the firm, is often called upon to define the philosophy of Christmas giveaways, identify the desired results of gifts and pinpoint the recipients. HR is expected to identify the results of a gift-giving project and to predetermine the costs of gifts as well as to plan the process of giving. Let us then focus on the matter of corporate gift giving.

While gift giving is essentially an art, it is also a science. As an art, it requires some skills and grace in execution. As a science, it should follow certain norms and policies, consistent with generally accepted principles of business management. As an art, gift giving should produce very positive results. As a science, it should adhere to standards and defined procedures.

Gifts to employees

Gift giving to company personnel is always a pleasant activity that both employers and employees look forward to. This is one employee relations activity that costs too little but creates too much value in terms of building strong linkages and repairing damaged relationships between managers or supervisors, on one hand, and the staff, on the other hand.

Some businessmen hate to grant dole outs. But most corporate managers perceive the great potentials of leverging employee morale by sharing company products and services. There is value created and even enhanced when top management decides to share goods with its own personnel. The best gift ever given to workers of a Philippine company is the sack of rice offered by San Miguel Corp. to its employees, which has become a monthly affair.

The norms of giving

Precisely, many employers are reluctant to start a gift giving exercise for fear that it may ripen into a contractual obligation. Labor jurisprudence in our jurisdiction determines that when a voluntarily granted gift has become a practice, then it ripens into an unwritten contract, thus, demandable as a matter of right. This is illustrated by the granting of a Christmas bonus that in many instances ripened into a 14th month pay, and a legal obligation of the employer.

As HR professionals and legal practitioners in labor relations, we counsel businessmen to always clarify the circumstances behind every corporate grant, especially those given for the first time. There must be a clear, preferably written memo, declaring that it is a one-time gift, granted solely on the basis of extraordinary performance of the firm for a particular year, or to cushion the impact of an economic crisis on the workers and their families. If not, the grant may be understood as an offer to increase the wage package. The employees' receipt thereof constitutes the acceptance of the offer. Thus, a contract is perfected by the meeting of their minds.

To customers and clients

Corporate gifts to customers are usually used as marketing tools to protect market shares and nurture valued customers. Calendars, organizers, umbrellas and T-shirts with printed corporate logos, but these things also follow industry practices and ethics in corporate gift giving. They are also governed by company policies and budgets, and should adhere to approval matrices. The Supreme Court once affirmed the dismissal of an employee who sold corporate gifts instead of giving them to customers.

Clients are usually remembered during the Christmas season especially when "retainership" agreements are about to expire by end of the year. The gifts are usually tokens of appreciation for a mutually satisfying relationship. It is also a sign of a desire to renew and extend the contract. There must be strict adherence to ethics and *delicadeza* to avoid a situation where contracts are renewed not for their own merits but because of the gifts.

To suppliers and contractors

Gifts from suppliers are governed by standard business ethics to avoid conflicts of interests and violations of trust. Employees running purchasing departments should come up with reasonable policies on the matter of dealing with suppliers and contractors. They should draw the boundaries between legitimate gifts and kickbacks, the thin line between sharing and bribery.

Contractors are often lavish in their gifts especially if they are following up bills that have remained unpaid. Thus, certain company officials purposely delay payments of these bills precisely to pressure the contractors to bring home the bacon. These are illegal and unethical practices, which may constitute a just cause for dismissal.

To government and community

Gifts to government officials and personnel are even more delicate because of the strict provisions of the Anti-Corrupt Practices Act and the Civil Service Rules and Regulations. Many Makati-based law firms are noted for their big budgets for gifts to justices, judges, prosecutors and court personnel, as well as to labor arbiters, commissioners and appeal reviewers.

This explains why these big law firms charge corporate clients with fantastic legal fees. Bills are simply out of this world because some lawyers win their cases not by merit but by bribery. Instead of bribing officials, they should help communities as an exercise of social responsibility. They should help the poor who need help coming from socially oriented companies the most.

Back to the essence

The ultimate act of giving is itself the Father's will to give His only begotten son to an unworthy world of sinners like us. Christmas then is essentially and entirely a season of giving and forgiving, accepting even the unacceptable.

By these, we should do our best especially to the least of His brethren, and we shall experience joy in our hearts. When that happens, we have truly understood the meaning of Christmas. Happy holidays to all of you then.

(For comments, you can reach the writer at the following e-mail address: josephus.jimenez@pcppi.com.ph.)

Metrobank's plan to raise tier 2 capital OKd by BSP

BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has granted Metrobank's request for authority to issue $100 million worth of subordinated debt papers in line with the bank's plan to raise tier 2 capital.

The dollar-denominated issue, arranged by way of private placement, is reflective of foreign investor confidence in Metrobank. The issue will form part of the bank's lower tier 2 capital.

Metrobank's lead in being the first bank to comply with BSP Circular No. 280 of March 29, 2001 further strengthens its dominant position in the banking industry. The approval of Metrobank's debt paper issue marked the initial success of the BSP's efforts to promote the tier 2 capital scheme as a way of luring more foreign investors into the country and boosting the competitiveness of the local industry with the larger regional banks.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said earlier that the equity-raising policy allows the investment to remain in dollars, thereby protecting it from any potential currency depreciation.

Metrobank's success in attracting fresh capital now underlines its ability to reinforce its stock and prepare for the prospect of an economic recovery. Metrobank's recent move to merge with the country's largest commercial bank, Globalbank, further built up its resources to P443 billion and its market capitalization to P60 billion, making it the dominant financial institution in the country and a key player among the Asean region's major banks.

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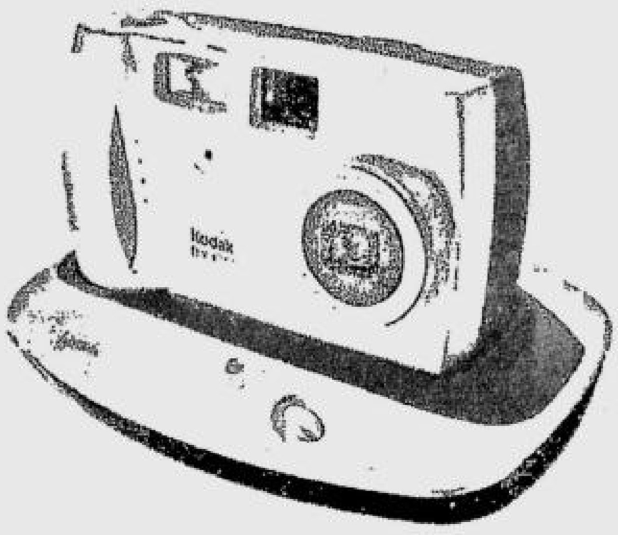

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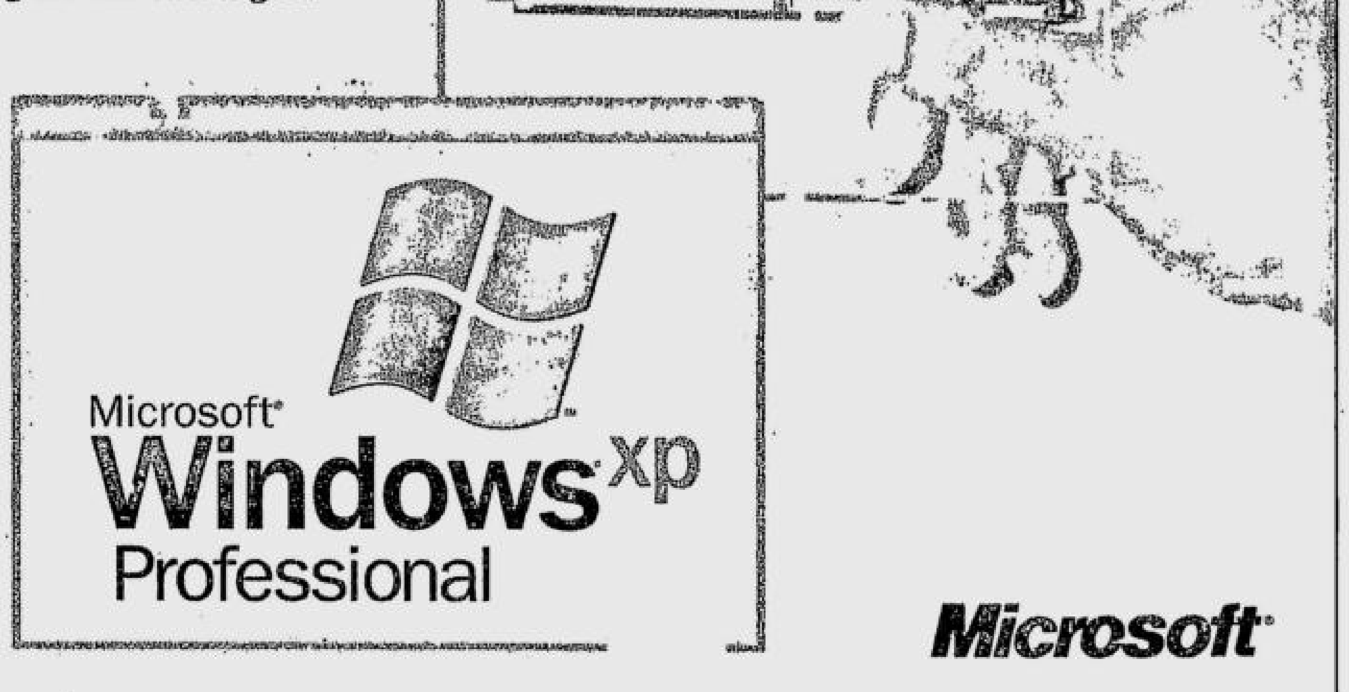

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Goodbye, Pinoy Times

AFTER three years of continued losses, Pinoy Times has succumbed to the inevitable and will publish its last issue today.

Until last week, publisher/owner Eugenia Apostol was negotiating with a group identified with the Couples for Christ in a last-ditch effort to save the daily.

The newspaper staff, majority of whom came from the Gokongwei-era Manila Times, had been formally informed of the impending closure as early as Dec. 4.

Positioned as an anti-Erap paper, the bilingual tabloid began printing on Sept. 15, 1998, after taipan John Gokongwei decided to close down the Manila Times after an enraged President Estrada slapped it with a libel complaint.

With the Manila Times silenced and the INQUIRER under a Malacañang-inspired advertising boycott, Apostol had anticipated a vacuum of critical political reportage, a void which she had hoped to fill.

Apostol, who cofounded the INQUIRER in the dying months of the Marcos regime, had correctly read the political situation as when she did in 1983 when she spun off an opposition newsweekly out of the lifestyle Mr. and Ms. magazine.

Like the weekly special Mr. and Ms. Editions, which Apostol rushed out in the aftermath of the Aquino assassination, the special Pinoy Times editions also sold like the proverbial hot cakes during the Estrada impeachment trial.

And like Mr. and M in 1983-84, the Pinoy Times special edition also became de rigueur reading during opposition rallies.

Unfortunately, the popularity of the special edition did not rub off on its daily parent. Positioned as a serious tabloid and eschewing sex-and-crime, Pinoy Times was also hamstrung by lack of capital and editorial manpower. The paper only has 60 employees, 20 of whom are part-time.

And unlike in the late Marcos years, the political tabloid this time has serious competition from the INQUIRER and the other established broadsheets.

Still, Pinoy Times has lately been picking up advertising from the biggies like Globe, College Assurance Plan, e-Bank, and SM Shoemart.

It was just a matter of time, "one to two years," according to an industry executive, before the paper should show profit.

In the three years of operation, Pinoy Times has accumulated about P41 million in losses, according to an insider, adding that whatever money it made with the special edition was wiped out subsidizing the daily.

Luxury car index

THERE may be a lot of job losses and a number of factory closures but, judging from the sales of luxury cars, there are also quite a few individuals whose fortunes seem to be on the upswing despite the tough times.

Volvo has already sold 220 luxury cars, mainly the high-end S60 and S80, as against its 2002 target of 200 cars, reported Viking Cars president

COCKTALES/ B6

COCKTALES

By Victor C. Agustin

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BMW 318ia Exec	2,165,000	433,000	44,514
BMW 325ia	2,600,000	520,000	53,465
BMW 325ia Exec	2,700,000	540,500	56,856

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Per DTI-NCR Permit no. 4234•Series of 2001

Prime Orion seeks relief on ₱900M in loans from PNB

BY DORIS C. DUMLAO

PRIME Orion Philippines Inc., formerly Guoco Holdings (Philippines) Inc., is seeking the restructuring of about P900 million worth of loans with Philippine National Bank as part of efforts to rationalize about P6.22 billion worth of current liabilities.

Prime Orion executive vice president Yuen Po Seng told reporters yesterday after the company's annual stockholders' meeting that other critical loan accounts with United Coconut Planters Bank and Banco de Oro Universal Bank, worth about P1.56 billion, have now been addressed.

He noted that the restructuring of PNB loans was part of the company's continuing efforts to improve cost structure and profitability.

"We have submitted our restructuring plan with PNB and negotiations are still ongoing," Seng said.

On the other hand, he reported that P834 million worth of loans with UCPB had been restructured and a portion even settled, with the agreed transfer of its Homelands residential subdivision to the bank and the issuance of five-year, quasi-equity convertible loan notes.

In the case of BDO, the bank's loan exposure had been covered with proceeds from the sale of Guoco Holding's 40-percent interest in Dao Heng Bank earlier this year. Seng said the company raised about P800 million from the sale of its holdings in Dao Heng, which was now merged with BDO.

The loan restructuring agreements with UCPB and BDO had enabled the company to reduce its consolidated loans by P1.88 billion during its past fiscal year that ended June 2001, although net debt reduction stood lower at P1.56 billion due to foreign exchange movements.

"The group is expected to benefit anew in the current fiscal year with the completion of the loan restructuring agreement between Lepanto Ceramics Inc. (LCI) and the majority of its creditor-banks," the company said in its annual report released yesterday.

"Full-year savings from lower debt service cost arising from these three debt restructuring exercises (BDO, UCPB and PNB), should significantly improve financial position in the current fiscal year," it said.

Seng did not elaborate on its new restructuring proposal with PNB. In 1999, however, a deal involving a combination of dacion en pago or asset swap and rescheduling had been forged with the bank but was not fully implemented.

Among the terms of the previous deal with PNB, which also involved subsidiaries LCI and Orion Property Development Inc (OPDI) were:

- Partial settlement of the company and LCI's obligations by way of dacion en pago of certain parcels of land of subsidiary OPDI;
- Extension of payment of the remaining balance after dacion;
- Waiver of 90 percent of the penalties on the obligations amounting to P224 million;
- Option by the company to repurchase the properties placed under dacion should PNB decide to sell them, and;
- Reinstatement of penalties and other charges condoned by PNB should the remaining balance of the obligations after the dacion fall past due.

Of Prime Orion's P6.22 billion worth of current liabilities, P2.64 billion consisted of loans payable, P1.73 billion of accounts payable and accrued expenses, and P1.79 billion of current portion of long-term debt. The rest consisted of income tax payable and unearned income.

Prime Orion is engaged in manufacturing and distribution, real estate and financial services business. Other core subsidiaries are Pepsi Cola Products Philippines Inc., Cyber Bay Corp. and Tutuban Properties Inc.

As part of the company's rationalization of asset portfolio, it completed the sale of three less critical investments in order to reduce debt.

Aside from selling its stake in Dao Heng Bank, it sold its interest in Zeus Holdings Inc., held through 60-percent owned Picop Holdings Inc., in December 2000, although ownership of the listed shell company was retained.

Last January, it also sold the investment banking operations of DHB Capital Philippines Inc. and refocused its financial advisory operations in subsidiary HLG Asset Management Inc., where it will hold a 55-percent stake.

Music raising funds for semiconductor unit

WITH a fresh lawsuit slapped against its principal shareholder adding to the uncertainties from the slowdown in the global demand for electronics, semiconductor firm Music Corp. is raising $400,000 through fresh loans to beef up flagship subsidiary Music Semiconductors Inc.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Music acting chair Jimmy Soo said the company's board has approved a resolution to secure a 12-month loan for the additional capital requirements of Music Semiconductors.

Michael Burton, the beleaguered president and CEO of Music, will provide at least $200,000 of the loan.

Soo also disclosed that Burton was currently facing a lawsuit filed by some US-based minority shareholders of Music Semiconductors for alleged breach of fiduciary duty, fraud and unfair business practices.

He noted that Burton, who used to be chair of the board but still sat as a director, had abstained from voting on the matter.

He said that Music's board had already formed an independent committee to look into and investigate the claims of these minority shareholders.

"This matter has also been referred to outside counsel. Management believes that the claims are without basis," he said.

Soo was elected as acting chair of the company while three new board members—Alexander Ignacio, Juan Custodio and Manolito Dayuta—were appointed to serve the unexpired term of directors who had earlier resigned.

Meanwhile, Soo noted that the new loan would be repaid at a spread of 3 percent over the London interbank offered rate. It will be secured by 10 percent of Music's stake in Music Semiconductors.

Music is currently raising $6 million to beef up the funds of Music Semiconductors, which is involved in the design and marketing of specialty devices for the networking industry. The unit is in need of fresh funds to develop its newest microchip products.

Aside from its core semiconductor business, the Music group has interests in information and communications technology through Music Telecom and Music.com. Cash-strapped Music.com is currently under liquidation.

Music is pursuing a corporate restructuring plan to attract more foreign investors and pave the way for its listing on other exchanges abroad.

PLDT sees big share of data market in 2002

BY ABIGAIL L. HO

LEADING telecommunications firm Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. aims to dominate the country's data market by next year, specially its broadband services to small and medium enterprises.

"While traditional services like leased lines will continue to contribute significantly, revenues are expected to shift toward broadband and IP (Internet protocol) services as more and more customers adopt their web-based applications and processes," PLDT corporate business group assistant vice president Nerissa Ramos said in a briefing yesterday.

She also reported that their data services group posted a 47-percent growth as of the third quarter of the year as compared with the same period last year.

Their broadband service, PLDT DSL (digital subscriber lines), was also showing 38-percent month-on-month growth since it was launched in November last year.

"We have effectively grown the service 100 times since it was launched. We have exceeded this year's target rollout capacity of 10,000 lines as of Nov. 21," she added.

From catering to just a limited number of areas when it was first launched, PLDT DSL now covers 90 percent of business districts in Alabang, Makati and Ortigas.

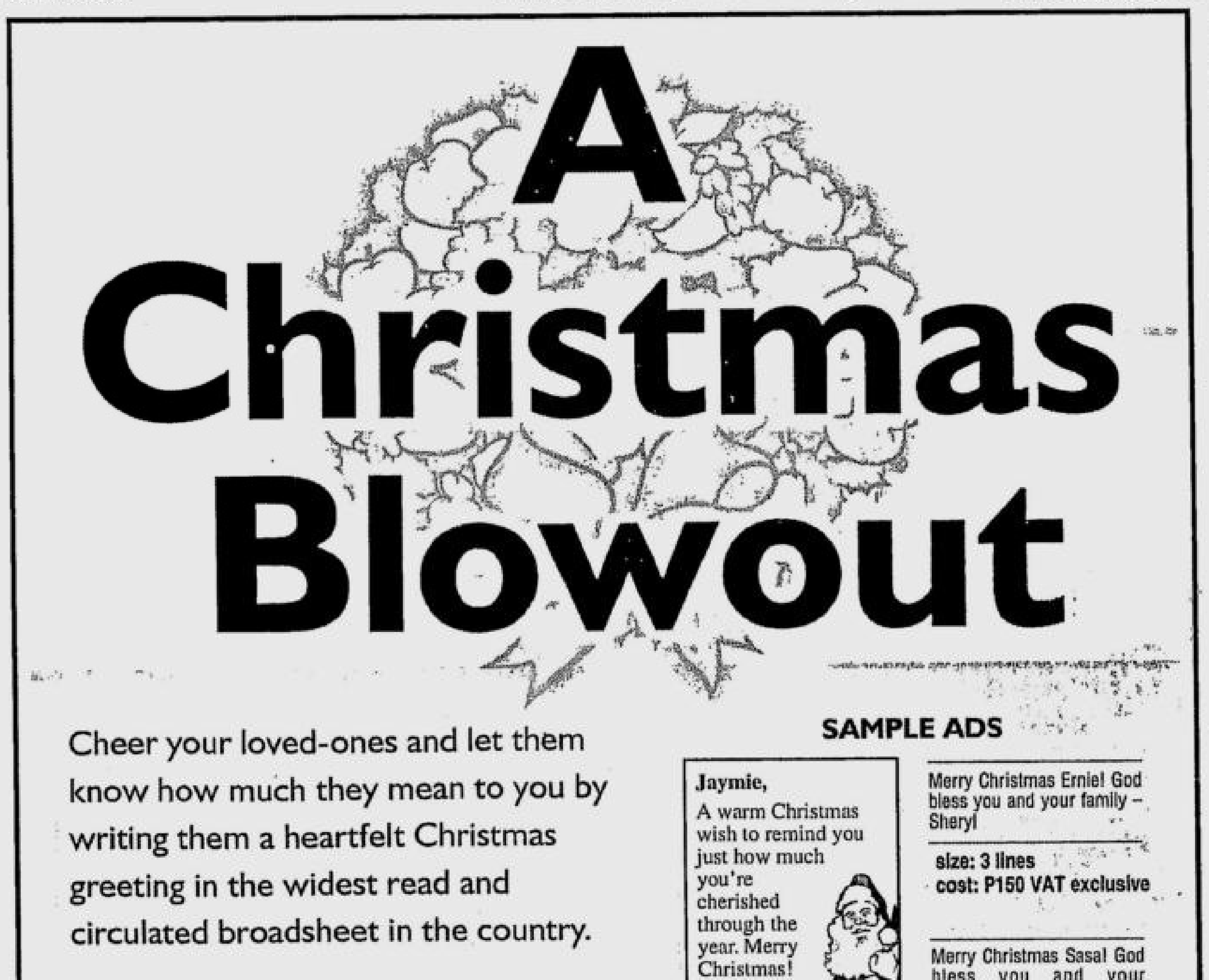
More than 1,000 buildings in Metro Manila have also been wired and connected, making these buildings "DSL-ready."

Aside from business districts and other areas in the metropolis, PLDT DSL is now also available in Metro Cebu, Metro Davao, San Fernando, La Union and Calamba, Laguna.

Ramos said they were aiming to roll out their broadband services in all key provincial cities nationwide by next year.

She added that they had ongoing rollouts in industrial parks and export processing zones all over the country.

At present, PLDT DSL has 4,100 subscribers out of its 10,000-line capacity.



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Merry Christmas Ernie! God bless you and your family – Sheryl

size: 3 lines
cost: P150 VAT exclusive

Merry Christmas Sasa! God bless you and your family.May you have a fruitful New Year – Shara

size: 4 lines
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DISCLOSURES

ELECTED directors of **Zeus Holdings Inc.** were Felipe Yap, Yuen Po Seng, Federico Cadiz, Daisy Parker, Ronald Sugapong and Ma. Carolina Guevarra.

* * *

WILLIAM, Gothong & Aboitiz Inc. declared cash dividends of P0.17 per share to stockholders of record as of Dec. 29.

* * *

MUSIC Corp. announced the election of Alexander Ignacio, Juan Custodio and Manolito Dayuta as directors and Catherine Gonzales as corporate secretary. Eduardo Villanueva resigned as director.

* * *

THE BOARD of **Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.** approved the increase in tier 2 capital in the amount of $100 million. *Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research*

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of Thursday, December 20, 2001)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57	58.5	57	58.5	459,000
China Banking Corp.	560	560	560	560	500
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	18	18	18	18	1,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	22.75	24	22.75	24	1,380,800
Global Business Bank Inc.	84	84	84	84	100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	181	187	181	185	99,590
Philippine National Bank	59.5	62	59.5	61.5	76,300
Security Bank Corp.	16	16.25	16	16	38,400
Union Bank of the Phil.	15	15.5	15	15.5	125,800
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Bankard Inc.	1	1.02	1	1.02	23,000
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1065	1080	1065	1080	13,170
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	22.5	22.5	22.5	22.5	140,000
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.39	410,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	585	600	585	600	13,690
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	100,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	20,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.35	3.35	6,000
Piltel	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	130,000
Philstar.Com Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	150,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	412.5	415	412.5	412.5	32,530
Philweb.Com Inc.	0.019	0.019	0.018	0.018	79,500,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	23	23	22.75	23	25,100
Manila Electric Co. B	30.5	31.5	30.5	31.5	264,000
Petron Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.48	1.48	3,526,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.92	570,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	1.96	2.04	1.96	2	2,217,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	10,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	10,000
William, Gothong & Aboitiz	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	5,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	200,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	694,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	12	12.25	12	12.25	16,500
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	23.25	23.5	23.25	23.25	46,500
RFM Corp.	2.16	2.22	2.16	2.22	2,091,000
San Miguel Corp. A	42.5	43	42.5	42.5	948,200
San Miguel Corp. B	54	54	53	53	484,800
Vitarich Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	100,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.68	0.7	0.68	0.7	80,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.7	0.72	0.7	0.72	30,000
Ayala Corp.	4.7	4.75	4.65	4.7	3,529,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	1.5	1.52	1.5	1.52	418,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	100,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	100,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	55,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.4	9.4	9.2	9.2	5,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.61	0.66	0.6	0.6	18,350,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	10,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	430,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	2.26	2.75	2.26	2.65	35,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	26.5	26.5	25.5	26.5	538,700
House of Investments Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	30,000
Ionics Inc.	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.9	12,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.7	0.71	0.69	0.71	4,500,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	20,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.31	2,000,000
Music Corp.	0.33	0.35	0.33	0.35	3,910,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.35	1,050,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	300,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co.	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.05	200,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.175	0.19	0.175	0.19	310,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	50,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Spi Technologies Inc.	13.25	13.5	13	13.5	183,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	20,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.46	0.47	0.46	0.47	11,730,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.46	0.48	0.46	0.48	40,000
Manila Jockey Club	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	28,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	200,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	22.25	23.5	22.25	23	522,700
Equitable PCI Bank-War	1.62	1.74	1.6	1.74	495,000
Omico Corp. Warrant	0.0012	0.0012	0.0012	0.0012	74,000,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10	10	10	10	1,000
Philweb.Com Inc.-Warrants	0.005	0.0055	0.005	0.005	249,000,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	8.9	9	8.9	9	35,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.8	4.8	4.65	4.65	7,727,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	100,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	20,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	1,250,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	10,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.78	1.88	1.78	1.84	2,864,000
SM Development Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	200,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.2	6.4	6.2	6.3	5,557,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc.B	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	20,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't.	2.85	3	2.85	3	227,000
Itogon-Suyoc Mines A	0.02	0.02	0.019	0.019	2,700,000
Omico Corp.	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	30,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	800,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	100,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.29	0.29	0.25	0.25	400,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	200,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	45,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	14,000,000
Pacifica	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	5,000,000

	SHARES	VALUE (P)
Banks & Fin Svc	2,217,660	99,133,410.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	518,983,720	194,055,035.00
PRO	17,728,000	77,262,760.00
Mining	34,247,000	982,250.00
OIL	64,200,000	426,600.00
GRAND TOTALS:	637,376,380	371,860,055.00

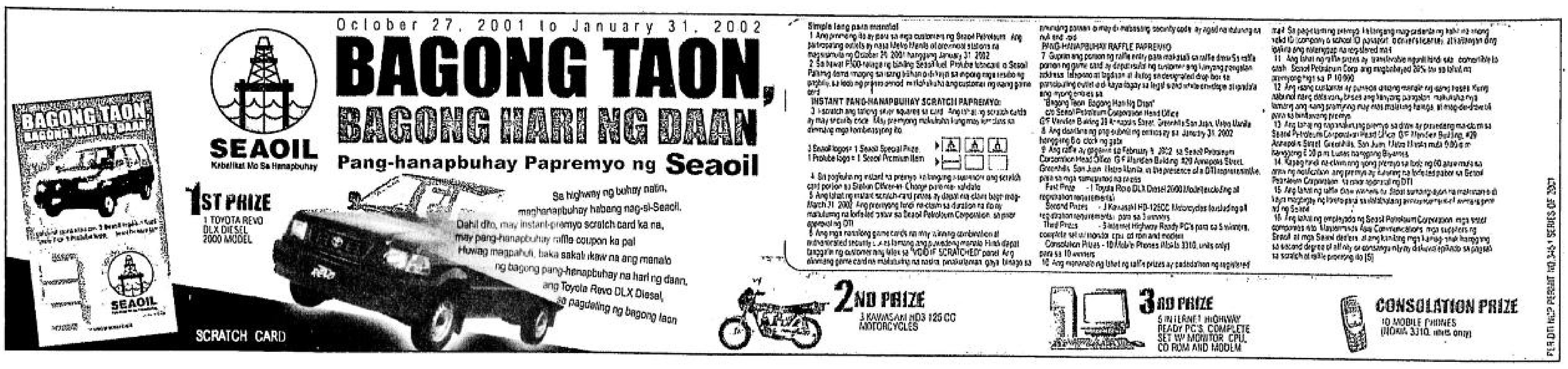
	AVERAGES	
Banks & Fin Svc	486.13	UP 14.06
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,547.13	DOWN 0.31
PRO	495.67	UP 5.83
Mining	1,027.21	UP 2.97
OIL	1.97	UP 0.06
All Shares Index	696.24	UP 1.10
Composite	1,139.87	UP 10.46

NO. OF ADVANCES: 32; NO. OF DECLINES: 30; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 32; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 94; NO. OF TRADES: 2,067

CURRENCIES

Dec. 20, 2001

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.110001	1.000000	51.4770
Japan	Yen	0.008669	0.007810	0.4020
United Kingdom	Pound	1.610612	1.451000	74.6931
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.142491	0.128370	6.6081
Switzerland	Franc	0.677822	0.610650	31.4344
Canada	Dollar	0.704763	0.634921	32.6838
Singapore	Dollar	0.606227	0.546150	28.1142
Australia	Dollar	0.570109	0.513611	26.4392
Bahrain	Dinar	2.944457	2.652661	136.5510
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.296001	0.266667	13.7272
Brunei	Dollar	0.603425	0.543626	27.9842
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000110	0.000099	0.0051
Thailand	Baht	0.025342	0.022831	1.1753
UAE	Dirham	0.302288	0.272331	14.0188
Korea	Won	0.000866	0.000780	0.0402
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.900900	46.3756
Germany	Mark	0.511292	0.460623	23.7115
France	Franc	0.152450	0.137341	7.0699
Netherlands	Guilder	0.453781	0.408811	21.0444
Austria	Schilling	0.072673	0.065471	3.3703
Belgium	Franc	0.024790	0.022333	1.1496
Italy	Lire	0.000516	0.000465	0.0239
Finland	Markka	0.168188	0.151521	7.7998
Portugal	Escudo	0.004988	0.004494	0.2313
Spain	Peseta	0.006011	0.005415	0.2787
Luxemburg	Franc	0.024790	0.022333	1.1496
Ireland	Punt	1.269738	1.143907	58.8849


October 27, 2001 to January 31, 2002
BAGONG TAON, BAGONG HARI NG DAAN
Pang-hanapbuhay Papremyo ng Seaoil
SEAOIL
Kabalikat Mo Sa Hanapbuhay
SCRATCH CARD

Sa highway ng buhay natin, maghanapbuhay habang nag-si-Seaoil. Dahil dito, may instant-premyo scratch card ka na, may pang-hanapbuhay raffle coupon ka pa! Huwag magpahuli, baka sakali ikaw na ang manalo ng bagong pang-hanapbuhay na hari ng daan, ang Toyota Revo DLX Diesel, sa pagdating ng bagong taon

1ST PRIZE
1 TOYOTA REVO
DLX DIESEL
2000 MODEL

Simple lang para manalo!

INSTANT PANG-HANAPBUHAY SCRATCH PAPREMYO:

3 Seaoil logos = 1 Seaoil Special Prize
1 Prolube logo = 1 Seaoil Premium Item

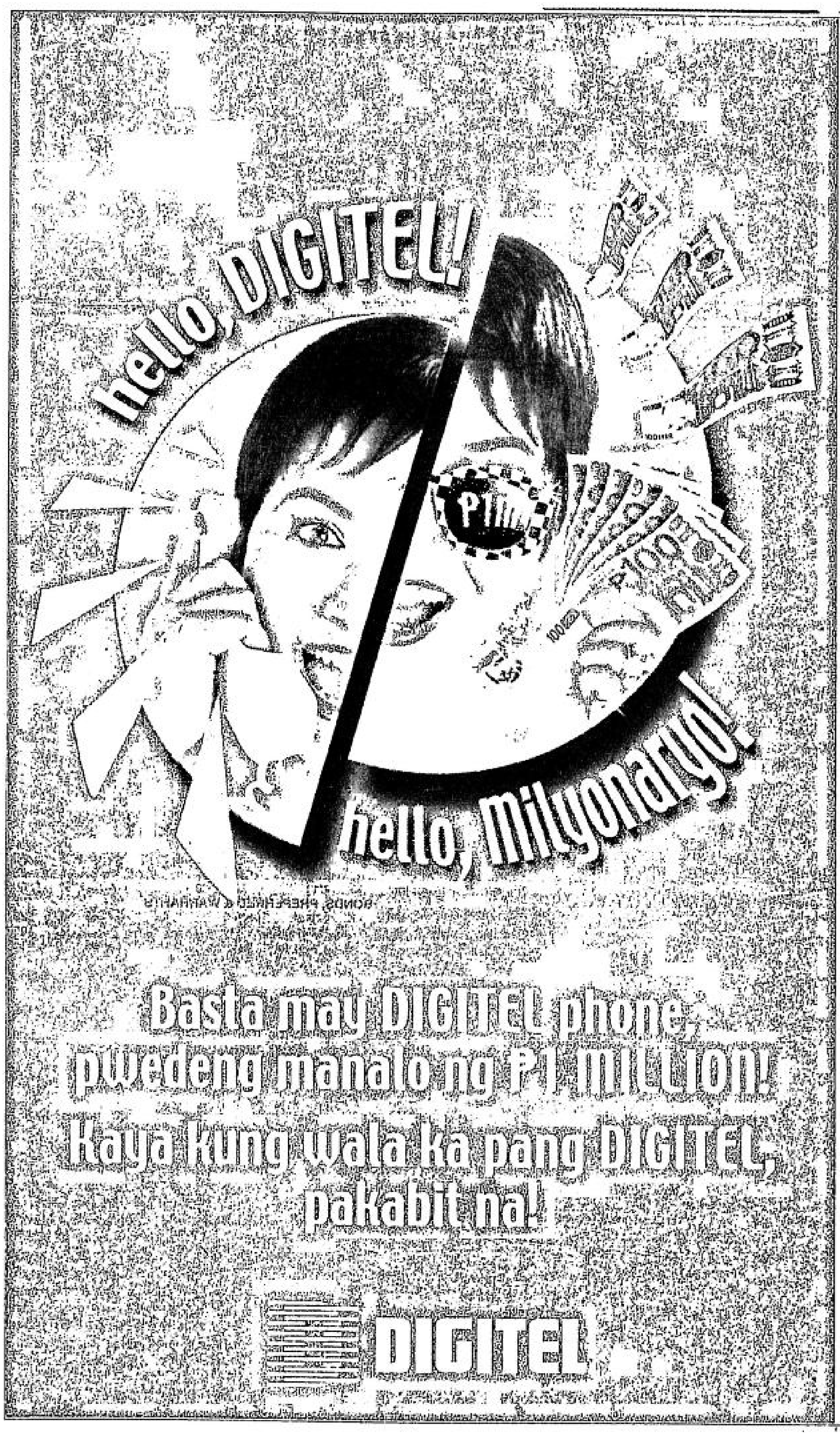
PANG-HANAPBUHAY RAFFLE PAPREMYO

2ND PRIZE
3 KAWASAKI HD3 125 CC
MOTORCYCLES

3RD PRIZE
5 INTERNET HIGHWAY
READY PC'S, COMPLETE
SET W/ MONITOR, CPU,
CD ROM AND MODEM

CONSOLATION PRIZE
10 MOBILE PHONES
(NOKIA 3310, units only)

PER DTI NCR PERMIT NO. 3451 SERIES OF 2001


hello, DIGITEL!
P1M
hello, Milyonaryo!
Basta may DIGITEL phone, pwedeng manalo ng P1 MILLION!
Kaya kung wala ka pang DIGITEL, pakabit na!
DIGITEL

PROMO MECHANICS:

1. The promo is open to :
   a) New DIGITEL landline subscribers (FULLY PAID and INSTALLED within the promo period).
   b) Existing DIGITEL subscribers with *good credit standing with DIGITEL who applied for additional DIGITEL landline/s.
   c) Existing DIGITEL subscribers whose accounts are active/paid up-to-date on the date of the draw.
   d) New subscribers who enrolled in the Make-the-Switch Program** provided that they have used the service for at least a month and are considered in *good credit standing with DIGITEL.

   *Good credit standing means that all the telephone lines under their account number are paid up-to-date and are non-delinquent DIGITEL customers.

   **Zero OTC (one-time charge) and amortized payment plan subscribers qualify in the Grand Raffle Draw only. 50% OTC paid in full qualify for both the monthly and grand raffle draws.
2. The subscriber's account number is the raffle entry. The number of entries is equivalent to the number of phone lines subscribed. The more telephone lines they have means more raffle entries for them and more chances of winning. The account number will be the one to be drawn in the computer.
3. The raffle shall be computer-based wherein all entries are electronically assigned, consolidated and drawn. The raffle entries are assigned as follows:

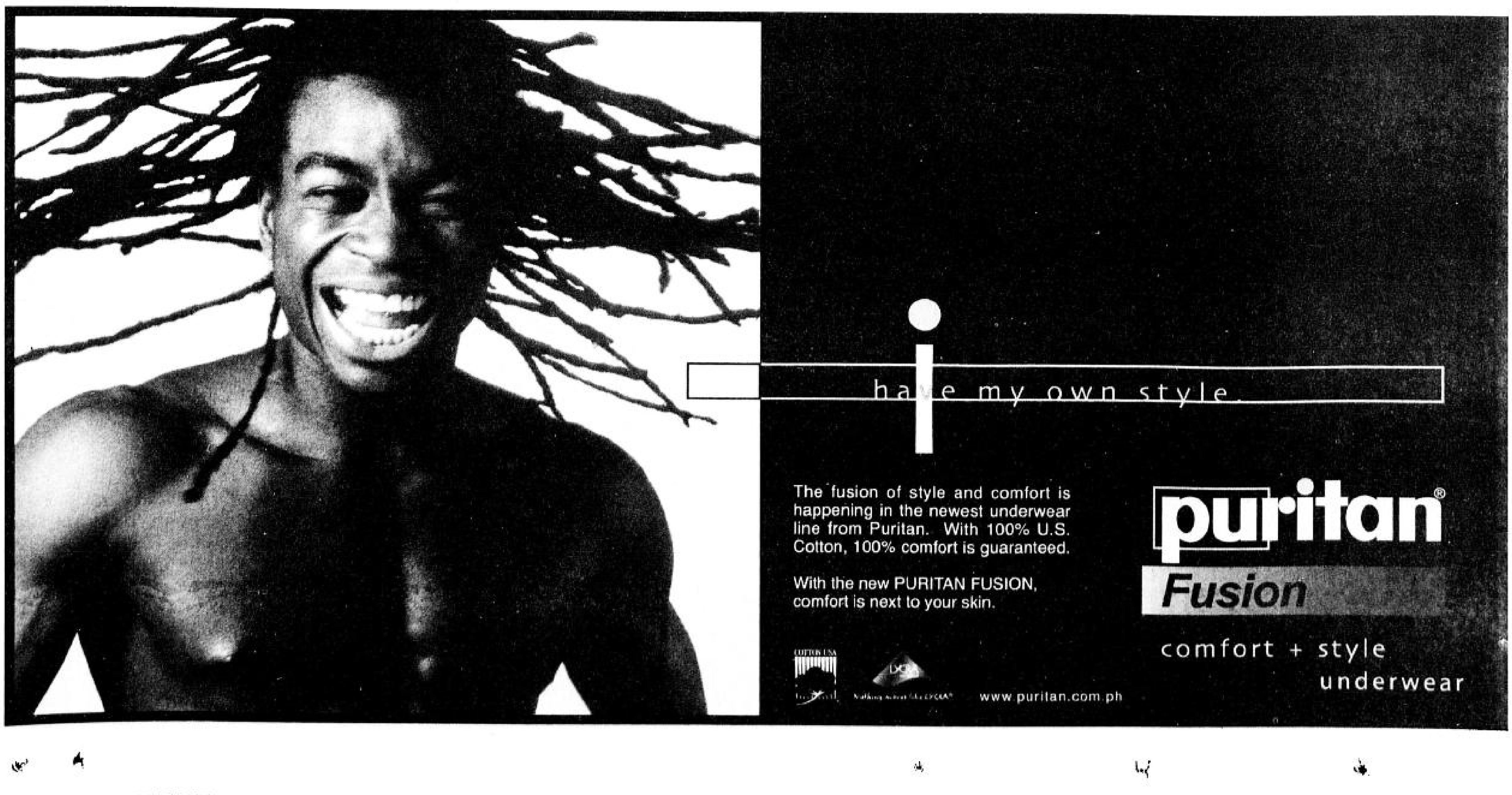
   New Metered (Choice Plans) = 1 entry
   (except Zero-OTC-Payment Plans***)
   New Non-metered (Millennium Choice) = 2 entries
   (except Zero-OTC-Payment Plans***)
   Existing Subscriber*** = 1 entry
   Make-the-Switch Program = 1 entry
   (Zero OTC and Amortized Payment Plan***)
   ***Qualified for the Grand Raffle Draw only.
4. There will be six (6) monthly draws and a grand draw. The new subscribers have two (2) chances of winning. First, they can win P20,000 in six (6) minor draws per month in DIGITEL areas. Second, they can win P1,000,000 in cash in the Grand Raffle on May 24, 2002. Entries entered within a specified billing cycle will be drawn for that particular monthly draw only and will no longer be included in the succeeding monthly draws. Preliminary draw winners can only win once during the promo period. But they still have the chance to win again in the grand raffle draw.
5. The raffle prizes are as follows:

Monthly Winners	Prize	Number of Months	Total Amount of Prizes
13	P 20,000	6	P 1,560,000

   GRAND RAFFLE: 1 winner of P1,000,000 (Grand Draw: May 24, 2002)
6. Deadlines for applying for phonelines to qualify for the monthly and grand raffle draws are available at the DIGITEL Customer Centers. All bills must be paid within thirty (30) days after the last day of billing cycle.
7. Grand raffle draw will be held on May 24, 2002 at 2:00 pm at DIGITEL Head Office at 110 E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave., Libis, Quezon City in the presence of a DTI representative.
8. Winners of raffle prizes will be informed via telegram or phone and registered mail. Winners shall also be published in Philippine Daily Inquirer, People's Tonight and posters inside Customer Centers and be announced on radio. Prizes should be claimed within sixty (60) days upon notification. Otherwise, prizes will be forfeited upon approval of DTI.
9. All prizes are tax-free and are non-transferable.
10. The prizes may be claimed at any Equitable/PCI Bank branch. To claim the prize, winners must first go to the DIGITEL Customer Center in their area specified in the registered notice and present the registered mail or telegram, the LATEST PAID billing statement, and at least one (1) valid identification card with photo and signature. The Customer Center will issue an authorization or certification to claim or withdraw the prize money.
11. The accounts must be in good credit standing* before the winners can claim their prizes. In a multiple telephone line account, if any of the telephone lines become delinquent, the whole account becomes delinquent. Thus, each line per account must be updated and currently paid.
12. DIGITEL employees, their advertising agencies as well as relatives up to second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promo. Also excluded are accounts falling under DOTC owned lines managed by DIGITEL, telephone company offices, regional telephone development project, government, and JG Summit.
13. The decision of the promotion organizer is final with the concurrence of DTI.

PROMO PERIOD: November 1, 2001 to April 14, 2002

See posters for more details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1733 Series of 2001



The fusion of style and comfort is happening in the newest underwear line from Puritan. With 100% U.S. Cotton, 100% comfort is guaranteed.

With the new PURITAN FUSION, comfort is next to your skin.

www.puritan.com.ph

Budget gap seen to fall below ₱140B

By Clarissa S. Batino

FOR the first time in four years, the government is expected to meet its fiscal target this year.

Department of Finance data showed that the budget deficit as of November reached P144.6 billion, or P7.29 billion below the projected level.

With the anticipated P6.92 billion in revenue surplus in December, the government will be able to contain the budget deficit below P140 billion as against the full-year projection of P145 billion.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho said the P6 billion in revenue surplus in December would come from other revenue items such as receivables from dividends and guarantee fees. A stronger collection performance of the Bureau of Internal Revenue is also expected, he added.

Since 1998, the government has been exceeding its budget deficit ceilings. This was a reversal of the surplus or balanced fiscal position during the Ramos administration.

In 1998, the budget gap reached P50 billion or P1 billion more than the target. In the following year, the budget gap was nearly double the ceiling of P60 billion at P111.7 billion.

Last year, the budget deficit reached P136.1 billion against a target of P62.5 billion. The huge deficit prompted the International Monetary Fund to cancel the last portion of a three-year loan program.

In the first 11 months of the year, government revenues have reached P508.903 billion, which was slightly higher than the target of P504.312 billion.

Spending remained under control as expenditures stood at P653.531 billion or P2.7 billion lower than programmed even as the government spent P3.22 billion more than its expenditure target of P61.294 billion in November.

Lower interest rates led to lower debt servicing requirement of P162.674 billion in the first 11 months or P4.323 billion lower than programmed as treasury bill rates continued to fall in recent weeks.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue's collection as of November reached P354.92 billion, or P1.168 billion more than its projection.

The Bureau of Customs collected P88.523 billion in the first 11 months, or P6.532 billion lower than its target of P95.055 billion.

Customs Commissioner Titus Villanueva was quick to point out that the shortfall was actually the amount of tariffs that other state agencies have not paid the BOC.

The Bureau of Treasury continued to fare well in November as earnings from transactions reached P35.786 billion or 55.2 percent or P12.73 billion higher than its 11-month target of P23.056 billion.

The performance of the BIR and the Treasury was also complemented by a strong collection of fees and charges that reached P23.441 billion or P1.986 billion higher than programmed.

These items had offset the lean earnings from privatization that amounted to only P903 million following the failure of the government to sell big-ticket items like shares in Manila Electric Co., Philippine National Construction Corp. and the assets of broadcast firms like IBC-13.

BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR 2002

President Macapagal-Arroyo and her economic team—consisting of (from right) Trade Secretary Mar Roxas II, Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas (partly hidden), Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura and Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho—in a yearend media briefing yesterday said they were upbeat on the country's economic prospects for next year. The team projects an economic growth of 4.5 percent next year on condition there is recovery in the United States.

Honda to start AUV assembly next year

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

HONDA Cars Philippines Inc., the country's leading passenger car assembler, is jumping on the Asian utility vehicles bandwagon next year in its bid to take a pole position in industry-wide sales.

Honda has obtained the green light from the Board of Investments to register its AUV model under category I of the Commercial Vehicle Development Program (CVDP).

The registration will entitle Honda to exemptions from the excise tax as long as its AUV model will meet the 10-passenger capacity requirement regardless of engine size. The excise tax ranges from 15 percent to 100 percent depending on the engine size.

BOI managing head Gregory Domingo said Honda would use the CR-V as its platform for the AUV, which will have a lower engine displacement compared with that of the sport utility vehicle. Of course, the Honda AUV will have a much lower price than the CR-V to compete with AUV industry leader Toyota Tamaraw Revo and the top contenders Mitsubishi Adventure and Isuzu Crosswind.

Honda's decision to field its own AUV model was prompted by the rising popularity of commercial vehicles which accounted for 70 percent of total industry sales this year from less than 40 percent five years ago. This is a sharp reversal for passenger cars which used to account for 60 percent of total sales.

The industry sold a total of 22,891 AUVs in the first 11 months this year as AUVs are selling more than the passenger cars which only reached 21,784 units during the period.

While Honda continued to lead the passenger car segment despite a resurgent Toyota, its growth has been hampered due to the shift in customer preference from passenger cars to AUVs.

The AUVs combine the comfort and style of a sedan and the toughness and flexibility of a pick-up truck. Also, its excise tax exemption gives AUV makers more elbowroom to price its vehicles lower than passenger vans or pick-up trucks or even high-end sedans.

Honda, which assembles the CR-V from completely knocked down kits at its Laguna plant, has already finalized the design of the CR-V's AUV model which would retain most of the CRV's current safety features and part of its amenities. Honda is reportedly enforcing the "no taxi" restrictions currently imposed on buyers of the City, Civic and Accord to maintain its brand value.

Agents raid offices of commodities trader

By Elena R. Torrijos

AGENTS of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the National Bureau of Investigation raided on Tuesday the Makati offices of Performance Foreign Exchange Corp. for allegedly trading in commodity futures without a license.

Armed with a search warrant, the NBI-led team raided Performance's offices in Guadalupe and Salcedo Village and found documents that the SEC would use in a case it would file with the Department of Justice.

"When we came in, they were still operating," SEC compliance and enforcement department acting director Tomas Syquia said.

The SEC issued early this year an order barring Performance from trading commodity futures, specifically foreign exchange instruments.

Syquia said based on information gathered by the NBI and SEC, Performance had been getting a minimum investment of $10,000 from each client.

Performance's chair and president is a Singaporean identified as Michael Liew.

Syquia pointed out that the SEC had yet to issue rules on commodity futures trading. Without these rules, only banks could engage in the trading of foreign exchange futures.

Both the SEC and NBI have received a number of complaints from investors against Performance.

The SEC is currently moving to revoke Performance's license.

The corporate watchdog has yet to determine the charges it will file against Performance.

Syquia said, however, that this could be a case of swindling similar to the complaint filed by the SEC against Belkin International earlier this year.

HSBC aims to be top credit card issuer

HSBC Corp. is aiming to be one of the Philippines' top three credit card issuers.

In an interview, chief executive for the Philippines Paul Lawrence said HSBC was considering acquiring a credit card company or a loan portfolio to meet its objective to be among the country's biggest credit card issuers.

The bank reported that it had already issued close to 300,000 credit cards from a little over 50,000 just two years ago.

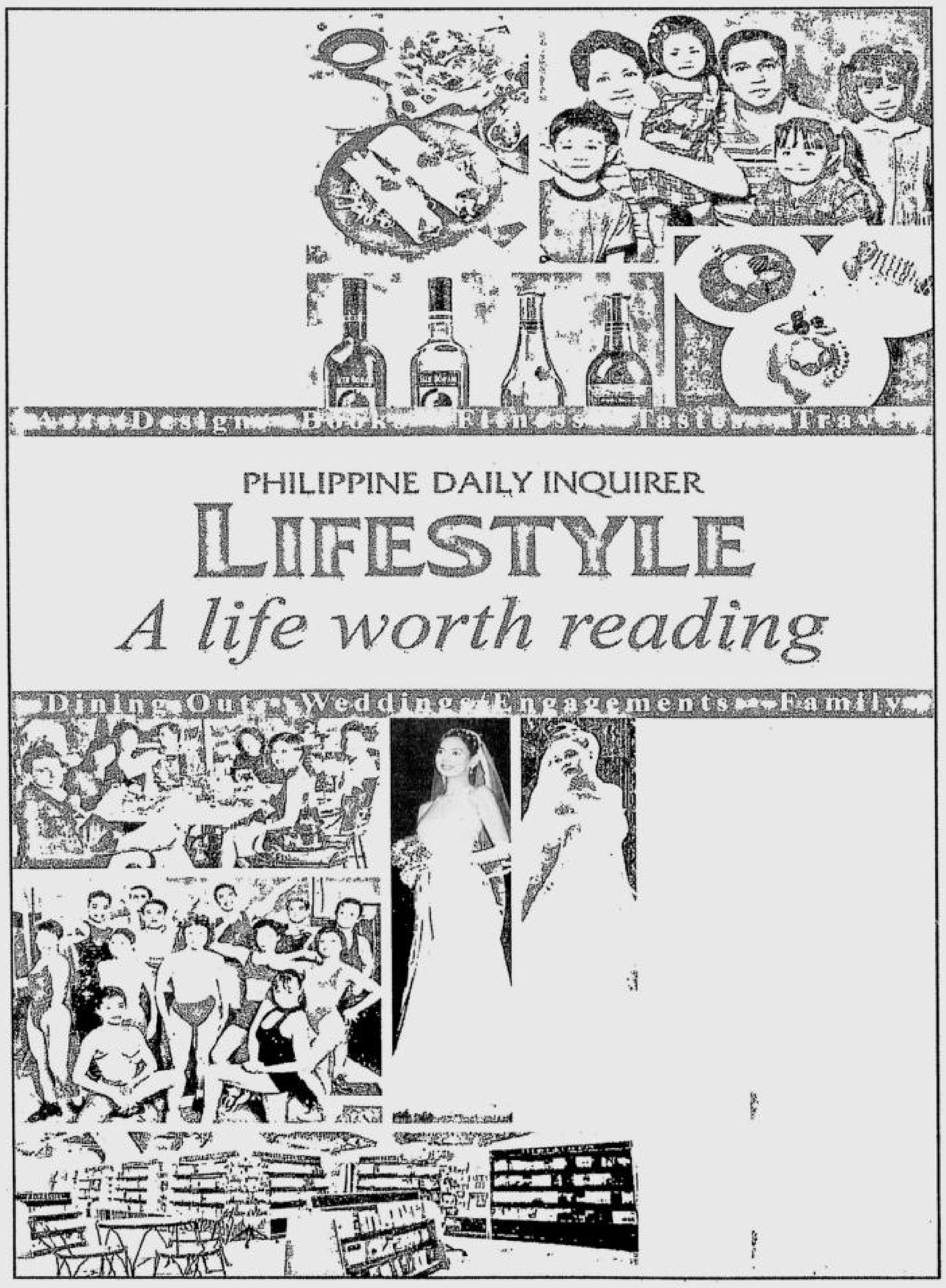
HSBC is currently ranked the fifth-largest credit card issuer behind Citibank NA, Equitable PCI Bank Inc. and Bank of the Philippine Islands.

HSBC is aiming to post a double-digit growth in terms of the number of credit cards issued next year, Lawrence told reporters.

He also disclosed that HSBC would explore a "bancassurance"—a banking-insurance hybrid—business.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is expected to come out soon with rules governing the cross selling of products.

HSBC currently has a referral arrangement with the country's largest life insurer, Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co. *Elena R. Torrijos*


Arts Design Books Fitness Taste Travel
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
LIFESTYLE
A life worth reading
Dining Out Weddings/Engagements Family

Baguio council rescinds ₱1.7-B deal with Uniwide

BAGUIO CITY—The city council has rescinded the city government's contract with Uniwide Sales and Realty Corp. for the development of the Baguio City market after the company filed for bankruptcy.

The decision to abort the contract was made during last Wednesday's council session. It stemmed from Uniwide's alleged "financial incapability" to undertake the P1.73-billion Baguio market modernization project.

Councilor Edilberto Tenefrancia said that since Uniwide failed to undertake development of the city market after the 30-year develop-build-lease (DBL) contract was signed in 1996, the city should take over the development.

Tenefrancia said Uniwide has been under the supervision of the restructuring committee of the Securities and Exchange Commission and that meant the firm was bankrupt and incapable of developing the 31.873-square-meter city market.

He said the city government was also worried that Uniwide would use its rights on the lease to pay for its debts.

"It is legally possible for Uniwide to sell its rights of the lease to another company. But doing that is morally wrong because the subject of the contract is a public property," he said.

"(But) it cannot do just that because the contract clearly states that it needs the approval of the city council before Uniwide can sell its rights."

Councilor Braulio Yaranon also said they are waiting for the notice of declaration of bankruptcy by the receiver appointed by the SEC.

"But we don't need to wait too long, we could still declare their incapability of developing the market as manifested by their shaky company structure," he said.

Yaranon said he had received reports that Uniwide is planning to drop the realty development business and concentrate on wholesale and retail merchandising.

"Uniwide is not financially stable to undertake the market development, it is better that it concentrates on the retail business, which is its expertise, and not realty," he said.

A letter obtained by the INQUIRER from SEC-Baguio on the company's cash and assets level showed that the Uniwide group of companies has reached its credit limit. The letter came from lawyer Amado Santiago Jr., Uniwide counsel.

"Uniwide's cash levels (are) not sufficient to support overhead and debt servicing," part of the letter stated.

As of May 31, 1999, Uniwide's assets totaled P19,864,007,881 while its liabilities totaled P11,101,621,628. *Jovelyn Reyes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Lehman commits . . .

(From page B1)

Lehman is reportedly talking with the country's largest, the Metrobank Group, as well as with the fourth largest lender Equitable PCI Bank on how they could address the bad loans problem through a joint AMC venture.

As of the third quarter, the NPL ratio of Metrobank was 17.21 percent or P30.958 billion of its total loan portfolio of P179.886 billion.

The bad loan ratio of Equitable PCI had soared to 20.99 percent or P27.15 billion of its P129.348-billion loan portfolio.

Buenaventura said the investment of Lehman might take place once the law that would provide incentives to AMCs has been passed.

A pending bill on AMCs provides for an exemption from the 6-percent capital gains tax on the transfer of property and also allows foreign groups to lease real property for a long period.

These incentives were specifically meant to attract foreign investors that would serve to broker the sale or transfer of the NPLs, but the government, Buenaventura said, might ask Congress to extend the sweeteners also for direct buyers of the assets.

US firm Cerberus had forged two separate agreements with the Philippine government worth $1.5 billion during the state visit of President Macapagal-Arroyo to the United States.

Cerberus is said to be the second largest corporate restructuring firm in the United States with $7 billion worth of funds in its portfolio.

Cocktales

(From page B3)

Alberto Arcilla. The sales surge came in the last quarter, with competing BMW and Mercedes Benz also enjoying the surprising spike, he said.

The local Volvo distributor had been scheduled to launch the Cross-Country model (P2.895-million cash price tag) but decided to defer it until the first quarter of next year after the eight units it had ordered had all been sold even before they could be shipped to Manila, Arcilla said.

Volvo's sister company, Jaguar, also reported good sales, with 46 "X" type already being sold as against a three-month target of 30 units. The all-wheel drive X type retails for P2.75-million cash.

Heard through the grapevine

OPPOSITION battering ram Pacifico Marcelo has sent word to Malacañang that he would issue an apology to the First Couple in exchange for the government dropping perjury charges against him. But Malacañang is not biting, considering the kind of grave he has dug himself in and, more important, the political havoc the American citizen has inflicted on this country.

(Cocktales may be reached by e-mail at cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

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LOWER END-DECEMBER TARGET

BOP deficit hits $1.3B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE COUNTRY'S balance of payment deficit continued to swell in September hitting $1.308 billion, higher than the year-ago level of $532 million.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura, however, believed that the external payments deficit would go down to a little more than $1 billion by the end of the year as export earnings improved during the Christmas season.

Buenaventura said that given the aggressive foreign borrowings of the central bank and the national government, the country's dollar reserves should be about $14.8 billion to date and hit the $15-billion mark by end-December.

Based on the projected 15-percent contraction in export receipts this year, the BSP had painted a worst-case BOP deficit scenario of $2.4 billion this year and a lower gross international reserves of $14 billion.

"I don't think we will hit the worst-case BOP scenario. I think the deficit will only be about $1 billion to $1.1 billion," said the central bank chief.

Investors use the BOP and other external account indicators, such as the GIR and the current account figures, as measures of the country's ability to settle its obligations.

A BOP deficit means the outflow of funds was more than the dollar inflow generated from trade and debt transactions with other economies.

The country's external payments position depends on its current account level which measures exports and imports, and capital and financial accounts including foreign direct and portfolio investments as well as debt flows.

Buenaventura noted that the country's current account position still managed to post a surplus of $2.113 billion in the first nine months of the year despite dwindling export earnings.

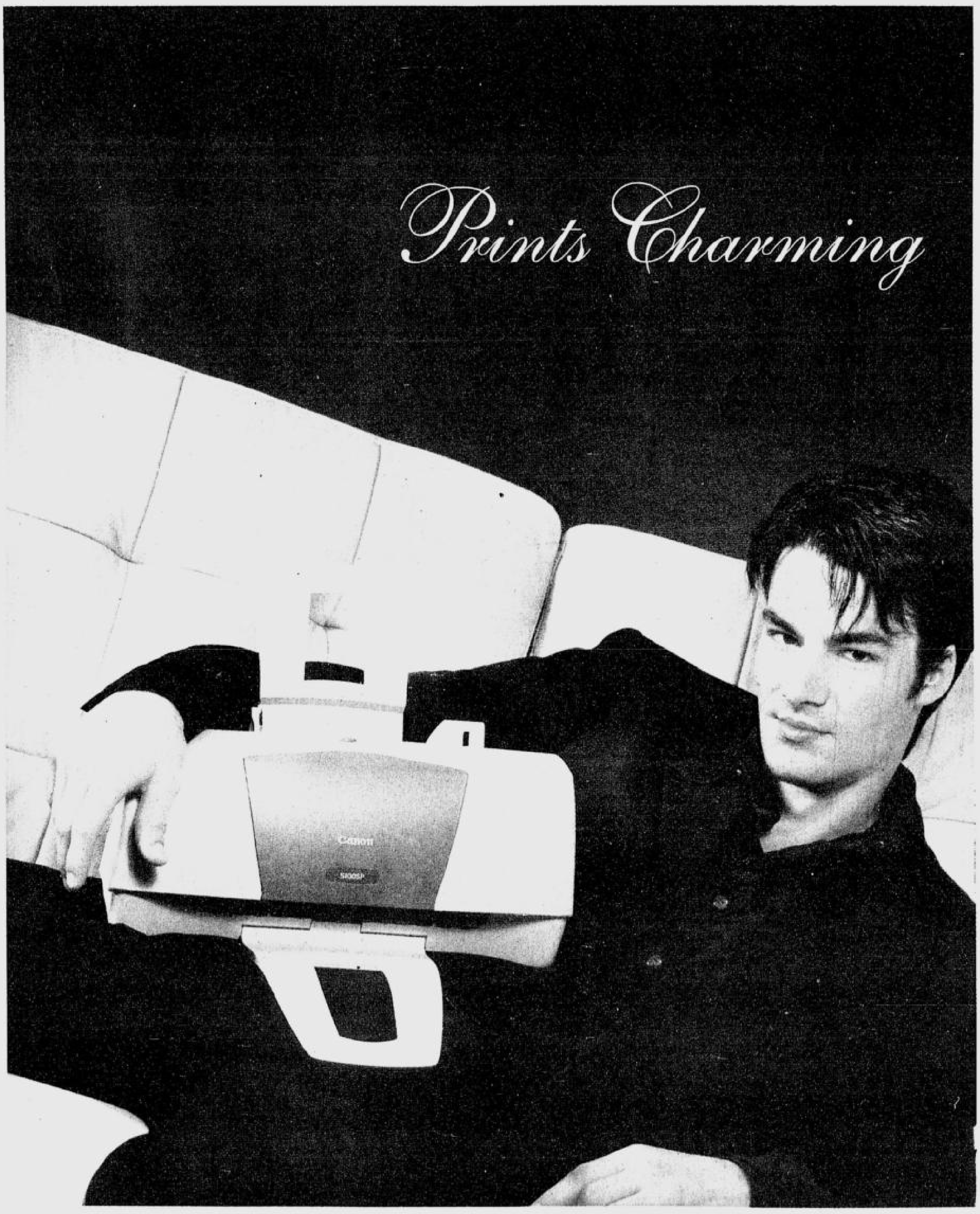
The end-September current account surplus, however, was lower by 65.5 percent compared with the year-ago level of $6.132 billion, reflecting a huge drop in exports this year.

Exports of electronics, which account for more than half of the country's total exports, fell by 23.3 percent. Garment exports dipped by 4.4 percent.

As of September, export earnings dropped by 14.7 percent to $25.841 billion from $30.3 billion a year ago.

Buenaventura noted that a corresponding drop in imports by 3.8 percent had helped preserved the current account surplus.

In the first nine months, imports weakened to $26.191 billion from $27.236 billion in September last year.



You never forget your first love: childish were its beginnings based on looks alone - albeit conspicuously handsome ones. How quickly it matured, as so many cherished pictures serve to remind. Long considered words were changed and changed again, then printed. Just to be crumpled and started anew. The way, even today, they make you smile - or cry - from their familiar place on the page. How bold they still appear. Life, so colourful, so bright and perfect was revealed to you in a way you'd never imagined. This Canon is terribly stylish, slim and extremely potent; its faithful heart graces you with 5ppm monochrome & 2ppm colour at 720 x360 dpi. You'll never forget your first: the intelligent - the downright sexy - Canon S100SP bubble jet printer.

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PNOC may put up gas-fired power plant

By Ronnel W. Domingo

STATE firm PNOC Energy Development Corp. is planning to build a new power plant once onshore drilling activities in Tarlac would show sufficient reserves of natural gas.

PNOC-EDC president Sergio Apostol said in an interview that the estimated reserve of 300 billion cubic feet in the Tarlac prospect was enough to commercially run a power plant.

Apostol added that, this early, a private company in Clark Field has already signified interest to buy the power output of the planned facility.

"But it's too early to commit to them because we still have to confirm the presence and the definite volume of the prospect," he said.

The drilling of the Victoria-3 well in Tarlac started on Dec. 1.

Apostol added that in case of excess capacity, the plan was to export the natural gas.

"We will just export our natural gas instead of competing with the consortium of Spex (Shell Philippines Exploration BV)," Apostol said.

Spex is the operator of the Malampaya gas to power project, which taps a reserve of 2.7 trillion cubic feet nestled near Palawan.

The project is expected to fire up three power plants with total capacity of 2,700 megawatts.

In a related development, officials from the energy department said the natural gas reserve in Isabela province would also be tapped to produce between 5 and 10 megawatts of power.

The government, for its part, is looking into expanding the natural gas market.

In an earlier interview, Energy Secretary Vicente Perez Jr. said the government did not want to confine the use of natural gas to power generation alone.

Also, he said the government was studying the possibility of importing natural gas from Indonesia.

An expected rise in natural gas demand may necessitate its importation five or seven years from now, he added.

GOINGS-ON

PDIC open on Dec. 26-28

THE PHILIPPINE Deposit Insurance Corp. said it would be open for business on Dec. 26-28 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to service claims for insured deposits.

In a statement, the PDIC said that the decision to hold office during the holiday season was in line with its commitment to serve the public particularly the depositors of banks that were closed during the year.

BayanTel's Internet services

BAYANTEL CEO Eugenio Lopez III said BayanTel would expand the company's product range and enhance the quality of its data services next year.

Lopez said this when he addressed the participants of the first of a series of seminars on BayanTel Internet Services.

BayanTel has a comprehensive range of access technologies necessary for businesses to move up in the Internet age.

These are Internet Access (leased line, frame relay, DSL, VSAT and DDU); Hosting (web, e-mail, server); Internet Protocol Transit (connection to NAP in the USA) and Managed Server (system integration, network consultancy, virtual private network and international roaming).

TechSite launched

SMART Communications and Greenbelt Telecom Center (GTC) recently launched an innovative service booth to cater to power cellular phone user.

Called TechSite, this facility is located at the second level of Greenbelt Mall in Ayala Center.

TechSite offers services that will enable mobile phone users to maximize the usage of their units and the phones' telephony services.

At the heart of TechSite is a specially configured computer system that is capable of linking to almost any locally sold cell phone. Through the computer, cell phone owners can download the contents of their phones such as the phone book as well as the text messages they have stored.

Little threat of inflation in Asia

SINGAPORE—Inflation will remain bottled up in Asia next year because the expected economic recovery will be too modest to fuel price pressure, according to a Reuters poll of analysts.

The survey of more than 100 economists in 13 countries showed a mixed inflation outlook, partly due to comparisons with a low base this year. But the common theme throughout the region was that inflation would remain under wraps in 2002, thanks to improved exchange rate stability and tame oil prices.

Demand will most likely remain weak in the first half of the year, reflecting the lag effect from the rise in unemployment and slower income growth, analysts said.

Inflation forecasts in most of the countries surveyed from Australia to Thailand were lower than in a similar survey in October.

"Even though the economies are picking up next year, they are not going to be at the point where firms will have pricing power to pass on rising prices to consumers," said David Fernandez, head of fixed income at JP Morgan Chase in Singapore.

He said any turnaround in these economies was unlikely to take place before the latter half of 2002, leaving room for the region's central banks to cut interest rates further in the first half of the year.

Oil prices, a wild card in the inflation equation, are expected to ease next year, giving more breathing space for major net oil importer Asia.

A Reuters survey in November showed the price of benchmark Brent crude oil was expected to drop to around $20 per barrel next year compared with an average of around $25 this year.

An expected recovery in exports and central banks' policy preference for exchange rate stability should keep Asian currencies relatively stable next year, reducing price pressure.

Countries where economists see inflation easing next year include Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Australia's inflation is forecast to average 2.4 percent in 2001-2002 (July-June) and 2.3 percent in 2002-2003.

Economists predict inflation in the Philippines will ease to 4.9 percent next year from around 6.1 percent expected this year.

But economists say they will continue to monitor the weather for its possible impact on crops because food prices make up more than 50 percent of the Philippines' consumer price basket.

Thailand's consumer prices are forecast to rise only marginally in 2002, by 1.75 percent compared with 1.76 percent this year, due to sluggish demand and easing oil prices.

In South Korea, inflation is forecast to slow to 2.9 percent in 2002 from an estimated 4.3 percent this year, helped by falling oil prices and smaller increases in public fares ahead of the presidential elections in December.

On the other side of the coin, inflation in China, Taiwan, India and Malaysia is seen ticking up next year, albeit at a moderate rate, while deflation is likely to drag on in Hong Kong.

China's benchmark consumer price index is forecast to rise by 0.9 percent in 2001 and 1.0 percent in 2002.

In Taiwan, inflation is seen crawling up to 0.94 percent next year from 0.13 percent due to a low base this year rather than any improvement in real demand, analysts said.

At any rate, prices in China and Taiwan should be tamed by their entry into the World Trade Organization, which will cut import prices and increase price competition.

Deflation will linger in Hong Kong, but at a more moderate pace. Economists forecast consumer prices will slip an average 0.52 percent next year compared with a decline of 1.46 percent this year as the economy picks up.

The island's currency peg to the US dollar, rising unemployment and its growing integration with lower-cost mainland China are the main factors behind Hong Kong's stubborn deflation.

Reuters

Asian power sector under the hammer

SINGAPORE—The auctioneer's hammer will ring around the Asian power sector in 2002 as Singapore, South Korea and the Philippines begin the sale of state-owned electricity assets.

But investors may be more conservative in bidding for these businesses after the dramatic collapse of US energy giant Enron Corp., analysts said.

"It has taken a long time to get to this point, and there have been many delays along the way," said Gavin Thompson, a regional expert with Wood Mackenzie consultants in Scotland.

The Philippines signed its power reform bill into law in June after eight years of delays and deliberation, and the government planned to begin the road show and sale process of the National Power Corp.'s assets in 2002.

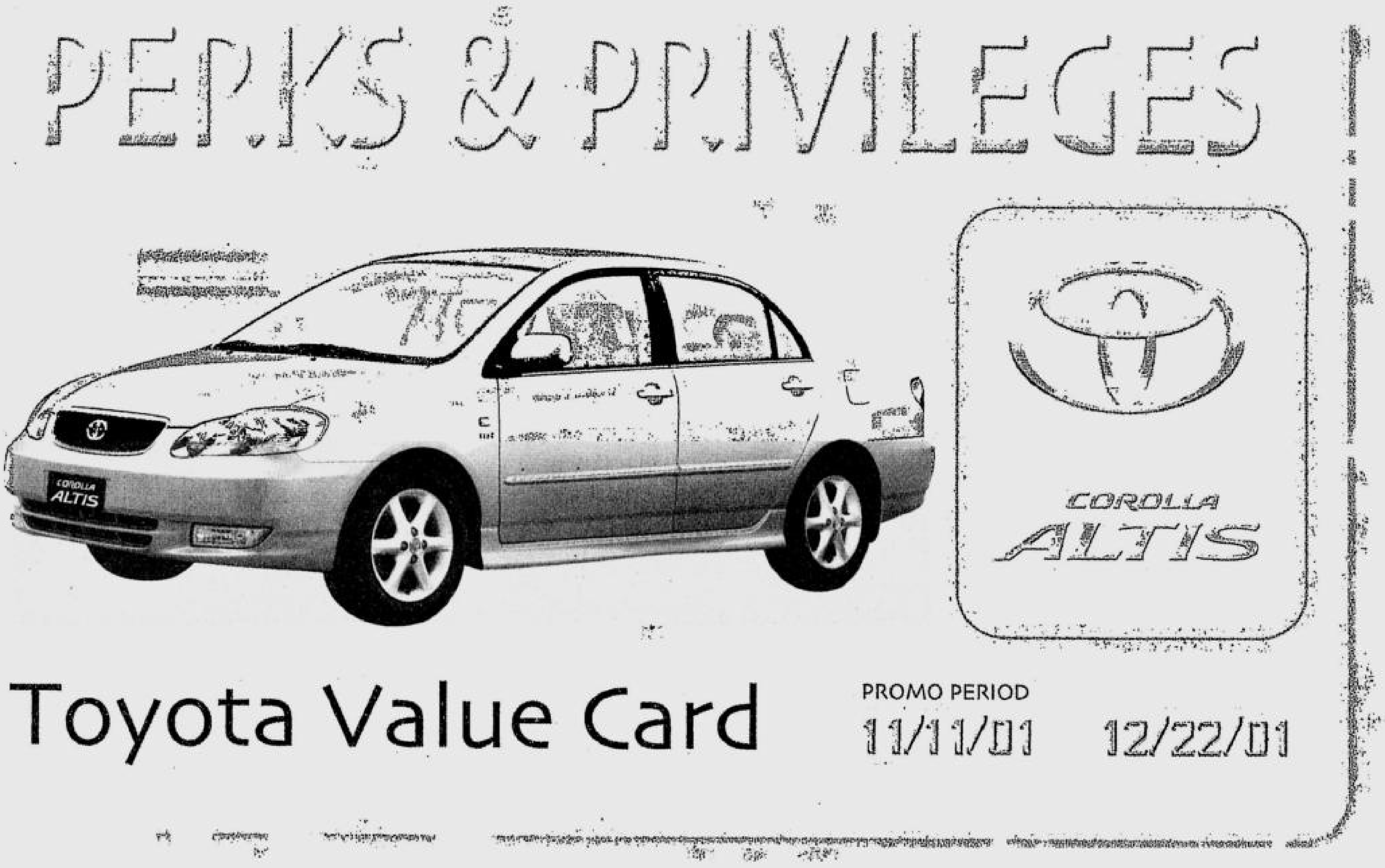
Singapore spent 2001 unbundling its power industry and preparing the regulatory framework for a competitive power market with privately owned generation companies.

The island-state plans to begin selling its three state-owned generation companies in the second half of 2002.

South Korea split the generation assets of Korea Electric Power Corp. into six units in April, and it is expected to begin the sale process sometime in 2002.

With all these assets going on sale, investors will be especially aware of the risks after the Californian crisis and the fall of Enron, said Ian Greer, director of corporate and infrastructure ratings at Standard & Poor's in Melbourne.

Reuters



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Japan's efforts to bolster economy frustrate skeptics

TOKYO—It was clearly a move meant to impress skeptics.

The Cabinet of reformist Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Wednesday decided to abolish or privatize several state corporations to help eradicate the pork-barrel politicking that many blame for Japan's protracted economic malaise.

Koizumi, who rose to power in April on promises of drastic fiscal restructuring, hoped the measure proved he has the resolve to confront rivals in his own Liberal Democratic Party—many with vested interests in the public companies—who have adamantly resisted change.

"I bet no one thought we would come this far," boasted Koizumi.

But if there was any applause from experts, it was scattered at best.

Many criticized the moves as too little to help a country that's in recession for the third time in a decade.

"In most cases, the changes are so superficial they won't be noticed," said Shigenori Okazaki, political analyst at UBS Warburg in Tokyo.

Japan's public corporations have long been the engine of the LDP's postwar spending to ensure economic growth, and Koizumi appeared to have bowed to relentless ruling party pressure to spare many from the surgeon's blade.

Though he had originally called for the scrapping or privatization of 163 institutions, Wednesday's decision would bring the closure of only 17 public corporations and place 45 others under private management.

There was little doubt the step would help reduce the country's debt burden, but economists nevertheless wondered how much immediate relief it would bring. The scaled-down plans also left untouched eight government-backed financial institutions that shell out money to aid projects, public works and small businesses.

If approved by parliament, the framework would be implemented over a four-year span.

Meanwhile, other analysts yawned at a decision Wednesday by the Bank of Japan to raise, and possibly more than double, the target for money at accounts of commercial lenders at the central bank from the current level of about 6 trillion yen ($47 billion). *AP*

BOJ cuts forecast for 7th straight month

TOKYO—Japan's central bank downgraded its economic assessment for the seventh straight month Thursday, saying the economy was deteriorating amid slumping exports, investment and private consumption.

"Japan's economy is worsening broadly, as private consumption is weakening in addition to a decline in exports and business investment," the Bank of Japan said in its monthly economic report for December.

The BOJ had used more cautious terms in the previous report, saying for example in November that private consumption "seems to be weakening" instead of "is weakening."

The central bank also voiced concern over the economy's direction, saying continued corporate cutbacks might put downward pressure on already deflationary prices.

The downgrade had been widely expected after the BOJ policy board voted Wednesday to loosen credit by pumping more money into the economy through government bond purchases and other measures. *AP*

US trade deficit soars to $24.43B in October

WASHINGTON—America's trade deficit widened by the largest amount in eight years in October, but a forward-pointing economic gauge rose for a second straight month in November, fueling hopes that the current recession would be over by spring.

The Conference Board reported Wednesday that its index of leading economic indicators rose by a stronger-than expected 0.5 percent last month after a gain of 0.1 percent in October.

Analysts read the back-to-back gains as a good sign that the country's first recession in a decade was bottoming out.

The November rise in the leading indicators, composed of 10 forward-pointing economic statistics, was led by a big drop in new filings for unemployment benefits, which had soared in October reflecting thousands of layoffs in the airline and hotel industries.

"The leading index is saying the worst is probably over for the recession but that doesn't mean unemployment won't keep rising for awhile," said David Wyss, chief economist at Standard & Poor's in New York.

He said he was looking for a recovery to begin in February or March, but he said unemployment, which now stood at a six-year high of 5.7 percent, would not peak until later in the year at 6.5 percent.

Meanwhile, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday that America's trade deficit soared to $29.43 billion in October, an increase of 54.8 percent, which was the sharpest one-month deterioration since June 1993. In September, the deficit had narrowed by a record amount to $19.01 billion. *AP*

Global chip sales down 33% in worst year ever

SAN JOSE, California—Global sales of semiconductors dropped by 33 percent in 2001, the sharpest decline in the history of the industry and one that sets the stage for a further shakeout among major vendors next year, according to a study released on Wednesday.

Dataquest Inc., a unit of Gartner Inc., said based on preliminary statistics, all of the 10 largest chip vendors had seen double-digit percentage declines in revenue in the past year as total sales fell to $152 billion in 2001 from $227 billion in 2000.

"As is evident in the sizable declines by most of the top vendors, the industry has undergone tremendous destabilization," said Mary Olsson, chief semiconductor analyst for Gartner Dataquest in a statement. "We expect further consolidation for the industry during 2002."

Intel Corp. had an estimated $23.5 billion in sales in 2001, making it the No. 1 vendor again with a market share that increased amid the downturn to 15.5 percent and was larger than its three largest rivals combined, the study showed.

Intel's sales were down an estimated 22 percent in the year, a better performance than any of the largest chip vendors except STMicroelectronics, Europe's largest chip maker.

ST took market share as its sales fell just 19 percent to $6.4 billion, a strong enough showing to make it No. 3 chip maker globally in 2001 after having ranked as just the sixth largest a year earlier, the study said.

Toshiba Corp., which announced a deal to sell its memory chip business to Micron Technology Inc. on Tuesday, was the No. 2 chip maker in 2001 with $7.1 billion in sales, the study said. *Reuters*

Russia's oil industry pitted against Opec

MOSCOW—One of Russia's leading oil companies pays for thousands of school children every year to attend a program that teaches them pride in their nation, confidence in their own abilities—and how the market economy works.

Analysts say Yukos Oil's interest in grooming future capitalists reveals more than how much Russian industry has changed its priorities since the Soviet Union's collapse.

It is also an open declaration of how Russian oil companies perceive themselves. Opec, their main rival, should have heeded the warning earlier, analysts say, before engaging in a battle of wills with Russia in a bid to prop up the plunging oil price.

"Opec is pitted against a really revived Russia, which has some of the most efficient oil companies in the world," said James Fenkner, a strategist for the Moscow-based Troika Dialog investment bank. "On the other side are really quite fat and inefficient Opec states."

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which pumps about 40 percent of the world's oil through primarily state-run industries, has complained that whenever it curtails output to boost the price of crude, Russia steps in and increases its market share.

So Opec gave non-members an ultimatum: The cartel will cut production by 1.5 million barrels a day as of Jan. 1 only if independent crude suppliers also trim by 500,000 barrels a day.

Russia balked but after much pressure agreed to a 150,000 barrel-a-day cut, significantly less of a reduction than Opec had in mind. More importantly, the cartel is not entirely convinced that Russia's pledge is genuine.

Russia did not address key Opec questions such as how long its promised cuts would last and whether it had the full commitment of the nation's privately run oil companies, the strongest of which can break even on crude prices of as low as $8 a barrel, according to analysts.

Hugo Erikssen, spokesperson for Yukos, said the oil giant "will, like any other Russian oil company, abide by the Russian government." Without even pausing for breath, he added, "And we intend to increase oil production by a double digit figure next year." *AP*

WTO sets 2002 budget

GENEVA—Members of the World Trade Organization on Wednesday approved a 6.75-percent increase in their annual budget as they prepared for the start of a round of trade liberalization negotiations.

The body's 2002 budget was set at just over 143 million Swiss francs ($87 million) said spokesperson Keith Rockwell. In addition, there would be 15 million francs ($9 million) to help poorer countries prepare for the negotiations. The money would be paid by the WTO's 143 member governments.

Trade ministers agreed last month to launch the new round of talks, which would last at least until the beginning of 2004. WTO director general Mike Moore restructured some of the body's departments to take account of its new workload.

Wednesday's session was the first meeting of the ruling general council at which China attended as a full member of the WTO. The world's most populous country joined the body that set rules on international trade last week after more than 15 years of trying.

Long Yongtu, China's chief negotiator on membership, said he was very pleased to be able to speak at the meeting.

"China will make its best efforts to play a positive and constructive role and to work with other WTO members in order to consolidate and improve the multilateral trading system and make its own contribution to the development of the world trade and economy," he said.

Long, who is based in Beijing, attended the meeting because China has not yet named a permanent ambassador to the WTO.

Around 30 countries are still seeking to join the WTO, including Russia and Saudi Arabia. But two countries that want to join are finding it difficult even to be recognized as candidates. *AP*

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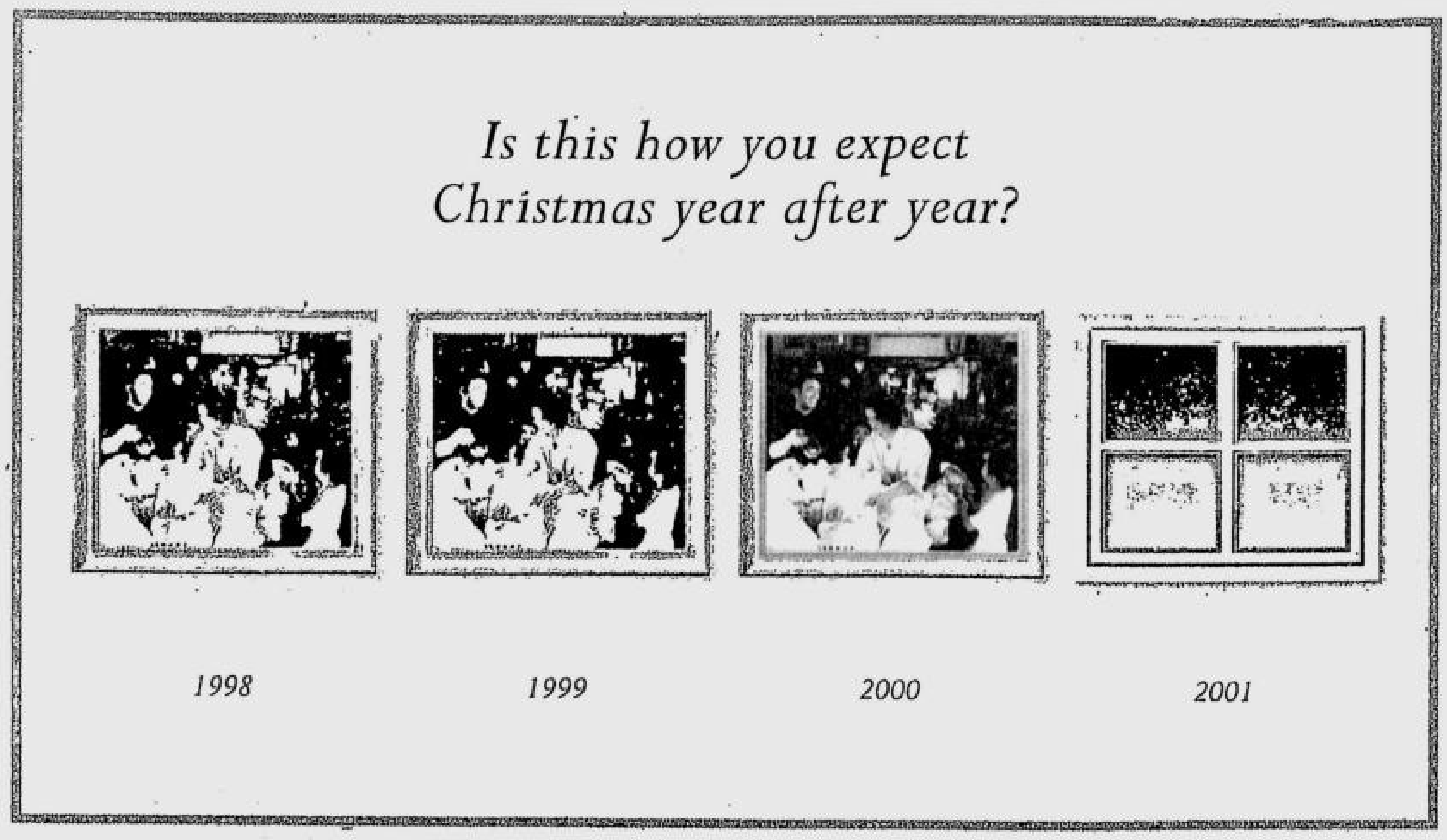

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Broadband faces 2002 test; shakeout looms

TOKYO—As Japan continues to hook up to high-speed Internet services, broadband providers are facing an industry-wide shakeout as competition heats up and doubts remain over the profitability of their businesses.

Topping the agenda in 2002, analysts say, will be the growing market for asymmetric digital subscriber lines, or ADSLs, high-speed Internet access services that use existing telephone lines to deliver data at up to eight megabits per second, nearly 150 times faster than conventional dial-up connections.

But the estimated 1 million-plus broadband users who have signed on this year have failed to convince investors that Japan's telecommunications firms can wean themselves off their dependence on fixed-line and mobile services.

Such concerns are hitting telecommunications shares, which are down 40 percent on average in 2001 having lost 6.7 trillion yen ($52.26 billion) in market value.

Still, dominant carrier Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp. will forge ahead this month and stage an assault on the upper end of the competitive market dominated by Softbank Corp. and Yahoo Japan Corp.'s "Yahoo BB" service.

Newcomer Yahoo BB, for its part, will be fighting to prove that it can avoid the fate of ExciteAtHome Corp., a US cable broadband and portal concern that went down in flames in September and almost left its 4.1 million users disconnected.

All this is good news for Japan's consumers as ADSL prices fall amid intense competition for market share, even if some smaller players are replaced by incumbents such as NTT.

"The bright spot that gets all the news is ADSL. You'll still see pretty robust penetration gains in terms of subscribers," said Kirk Boodry, an analyst at Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein.

The imperative to find new sources of growth is especially important as Japan's economy, the world's second largest, slides further into recession.

"The economy is very weak and this depresses revenue at telecommunications companies to a greater extent than people realize," said Daiwa Securities analyst Shinji Moriyuki.

A drop in revenues for fixed-line services, which were deregulated and switched to a carrier pre-registration system this year, is also raising concerns over whether some telephone companies can hang on to those businesses.

The related drop in telecommunications shares has seen NTT and KDDI Corp., Japan's No. 2 telecommunications operator, trade at record lows this week.

While a battle among the three major telecommunications companies is sure to promote healthier growth in broadband ADSL services, they face a myriad of problems.

No. 3 carrier Japan Telecom Co. Ltd. is being watched closely after it came under the control of British mobile phone giant Vodafone Group PLC this year.

After Japan Telecom spent 30 billion yen to promote local call services, the new president sent in from Vodafone, William Morrow, admitted its 10-percent market share was a "failure."

KDDI is suffering from different pressures, such as a high debt load and redundant wireless units, despite having built a healthy fixed-line user base.

And in the broadband ADSL arena, neither KDDI nor Japan Telecom have managed to climb into the Top 10.

NTT, which had been hoping to use ADSL as a bridge to even more advanced services, was forced to cut its rates when Yahoo BB launched a half-price 8-megabit-per-second service to challenge NTT's 1.5-mbps service.

Although NTT will have its own 8-mbps ADSL up and running at the beginning of 2002, it is now showing an increasing willingness to move beyond ADSL.

"We would like to expand our fiber-optic services and make that our core business," NTT president Junichiro Miyazu told reporters recently.

For now, however, the ADSL battle is turning into a fight between deep-pocketed NTT and the more nimble Softbank group.

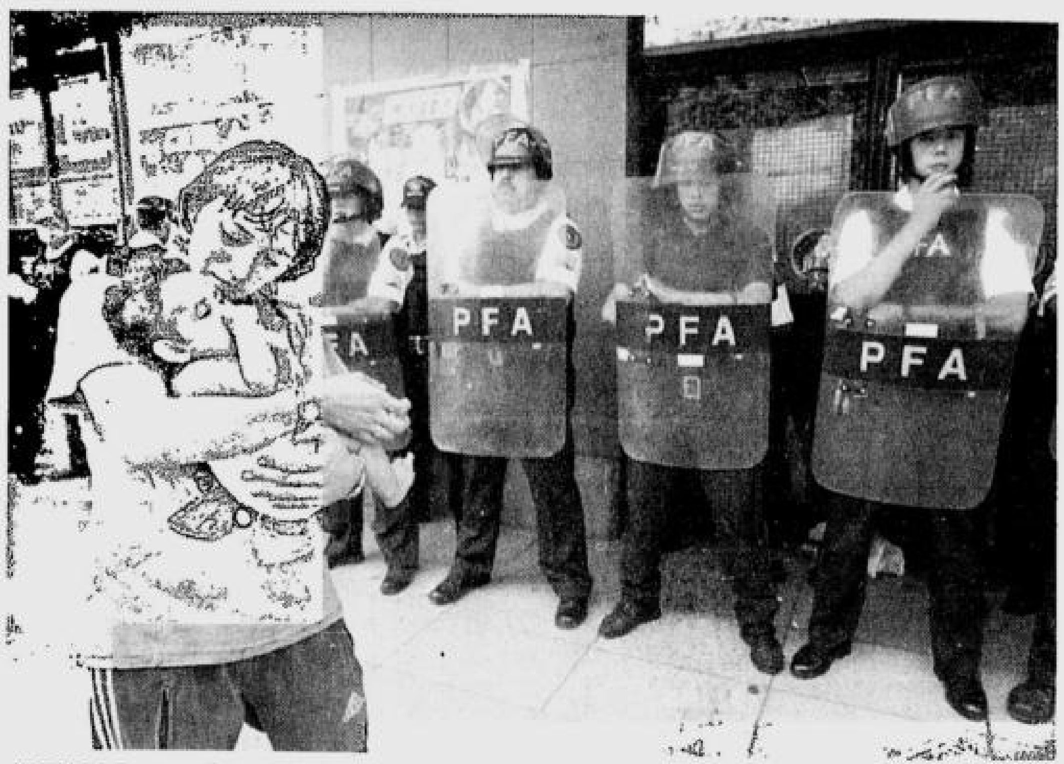
"Eventually something has to give. You'll also see some players drop out of the game," said Dresdner's Boodry.

Already, pioneering ADSL provider Tokyo Metallic Communications Corp. went under in June and was acquired by Softbank.

While most analysts say NTT may end up king of the hill in broadband services, it faces challenges on all fronts, ranging from its basic business of providing telephone call services to slowing growth of its mobile operator NTT DoCoMo Inc.

Telephone companies aren't the only ones keen to see broadband services take root in 2002.

Yoshiaki Kushiki, managing director of multimedia and software research and development at Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd., hopes to unite his firm's Panasonic and National brand audiovisual products, appliances, cell phones and chips with each other and into high-speed networks. *Reuters*



JESSICA Bona walks with her daughter, Pricilla, past a line of police officers guarding a Buenos Aires supermarket from looters. Argentine President Fernando de la Rua declared a state of siege on Wednesday, seizing special powers to deal with widespread rioting and looting sparked by a deepening economic crisis. AP

AT&T, Comcast reach $52-B deal to merge cable business

NEW YORK—Comcast Corp. will merge with AT&T Corp.'s broadband unit in a deal worth about $52 billion, ending a bidding contest for the largest US cable television operator, the companies said Wednesday night.

AT&T's selection of the Comcast bid came five months after it spurned a $41-billion unsolicited bid by the United States' No. 3 cable operator for the cable division as being too low.

The deal also includes about $20 billion in AT&T debt.

Under the merger plan, AT&T will spin off its cable division and simultaneously merge it with Comcast, forming a new company called AT&T Comcast Corp.

The company's board met earlier this month to discuss bids for its broadband operations, including the possibility of spinning it off as a standalone business, but decided to have further discussions with bidders before making a decision.

Other companies that submitted bids for Denver-based AT&T Broadband were AOL Time Warner Inc. and Cox Communications Inc.

Microsoft Corp. also considered increasing its stake in AT&T Broadband, or participating in a bid by Comcast or Cox in return for a stake.

AT&T broadband has about 13.8 million cable subscribers, including more than 3 million who use its digital video services, according to the National Cable Television Association.

The bidding process started after Comcast, the No. 3 US cable operator, made a $41-billion hostile bid in July for AT&T Broadband.

Comcast's surprise offer came the day before the New York-based AT&T's spin-off of its wireless operation into an independent company, the first stage in a plan to break the communications conglomerate into five separate companies.

The biggest of those AT&T units is the sprawling cable operation that AT&T cobbled together with a $100-billion acquisition spree that began three years ago.

Analysts had said a decision to sell the broadband unit to AOL Time Warner, the United States' second largest cable company, would likely face heavy scrutiny by federal regulators and politicians wary about a combined company with about 26.4 million subscribers. *AP*

Microsoft again tops Asia's leading multinational firms

HONG KONG—US computer software giant Microsoft Corp. remained the leading multinational company doing business in Asia for the seventh year running, a survey showed Thursday.

The annual company survey carried out by Hong Kong-based weekly Far Eastern Economic Review showed Microsoft continued to rank No. 1 for financial soundness and as a company others tried to emulate despite its high-profile litigation and declining profits.

GE management was rated higher than Microsoft for management vision this year and the US-based company also finished second, behind Microsoft, in the category of companies others tried to emulate.

Of the Top 10 multinational company overall leaders, Nokia Oyj came first in terms of innovation and ranked third as a producer of high quality products.

Nokia is followed by McDonald's Corp., IBM Corp., The Coca-Cola Co., Visa International, Intel Corp., Walt Disney and Nestlé SA in the Top 10 overall list.

The survey asked the weekly's readers to rank 208 multinational corporations in Asia and between 26 and 39 companies in each of 11 countries around the region.

In all, 1,943 people responded in the survey.

According to the survey, the companies ranked No. 1 in their respective countries are Woolworths in Australia, Mass Transit Railway in Hong Kong, Infosys Technologies in India, Astra International in Indonesia and Toyota Motor in Japan.

The others are Genting for Malaysia, Jollibee Foods in the Philippines, Singapore Airlines in Singapore, Samsung Electronics in South Korea, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing in Taiwan and Charoen Pokphand Group in Thailand. *AFP*

Murdoch's News Corp. seeks more China access after deal

BEIJING—Media baron Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. said Thursday that it hoped a landmark deal to broadcast a cable television channel in south China would serve as a bridgehead into the country's 1.3-billion strong market.

News Corp.'s Asian unit, Star Group, said late Wednesday that it would start broadcasting a 24-hour Mandarin-language general entertainment channel into prosperous Guangdong province beginning next year.

The agreement marks the realization of a long-held ambition for Murdoch, who has spent recent years painstakingly building good relations with the communist regime.

"In the long term, we look forward to having a broader reach to Chinese audiences," Wang Yukui, a Beijing-based spokesperson for News Corp., told AFP.

The door for further expansion has already been held open by Ding Guangen, the Chinese Communist Party's chief ideologist.

"The agreement is a good start for our cooperation which will be further developed in steps," Ding said, according to a Star statement.

The deal was signed Wednesday by Star and China Central Television (CCTV), China International Television Corp. and Guangdong Cable TV Networks Co. Ltd.

Under its terms, Star's sister company in the United States, Fox Cable Networks, will carry CCTV-9, CCTV's English-language news and current affairs channel, throughout the United States. *AFP*

Handheld PC maker Palm reports Q2 loss

SANTA CLARA, California—Struggling handheld computer maker Palm Inc. on Wednesday reported a second-quarter loss that was narrower than Wall Street had expected.

For the three months ended Nov. 30, Palm reported a net loss of $25.2 million, or 4 cents a share. In the year-ago period, the Santa Clara-based company earned $20.3 million, or 4 cents a share.

Excluding one-time events and restructuring charges, the company reported a pro forma loss of $36.6 million, or 6 cents a share, compared with a pro forma profit of $27.5 million, or 5 cents a share, in the year-ago period.

Wall Street had expected the company to report a second-quarter loss of 7 cents a share, according to a survey of analysts by First Call/Thomson Financial.

The company said revenues for the quarter were $290.6 million, down 44 percent from the $522.2 million in the year-ago period.

Second-quarter revenues were up 36 percent from $214.3 million in the first quarter.

Palm remains the worldwide leading maker of personal digital assistants but is struggling to return to profitability. The economic slump in 2001 led to a sudden drop in demand and a huge inventory glut.

At the same time, the company faced increased competition from rivals and admittedly made some missteps in introducing new products, stalling sales with early announcements and production delays.

The company in November cut its work force by 16 percent, or 250 employees. Palm also cut 250 employees in March. *AP*

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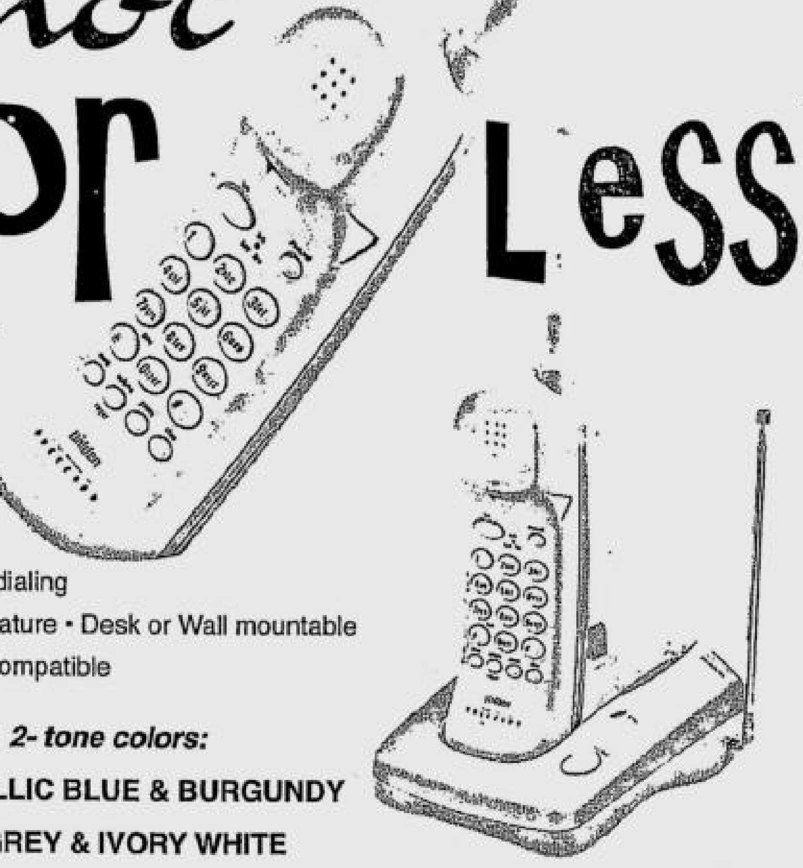

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Department of Education
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
IMPLEMENTING TASK FORCE

Philippines-Australia
Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao Project
(PA - BEAM)

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- All positions are contractual, i.e, co-terminous with project life.
- Applicants should be willing to relocate to Davao City (where the project office will be located) at no extra cost to the Project.
- Prospective hirees should be willing to travel to project sites within Regions XI, XII and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).
- Issuance of Contract of Employment is bi-annual renewal of which is subject to the semestral evaluation of job performance.
- Letter of Intent should be forwarded not later than 21 December, 2001 to:

TERESITA D. FELIPE
Executive Director
DepEd - EDPITAF
2/F Dorm D, PSC-NAS Complex
Meralco Avenue
Pasig City

LIST OF VACANCIES

(In compliance with RA 7041)

2 Project Dev't. Officer IV

SG: 22; Bachelor's degree holder • Minimum of five (5) years exposure in implementing foreign-assisted projects • Must have held a senior management position for the last five (5) years • Experience in managing and facilitating training, conferences and seminars • Ability to deal with cross-cultural differences • Proficiency in the application of relevant computer softwares • Familiarity in government accounting rules and procedures • Has good communication skills, written and oral; and Completion of relevant trainings (120 hours)

2 Project Dev't. Officer III

SG18; Bachelor's degree holder • Minimum of five (5) years exposure in implementing foreign-assisted projects • Must have held a junior management position for the last five (5) years • Good working knowledge in government accounting rules and procedures • Ability to deal with cross-cultural differences • Experience in managing and facilitating trainings, conferences and seminars • Proficiency in the application of relevant computer softwares • Has good communication skills, written and oral; Completion of relevant trainings (120 hours)

1 Project Dev't. Officer II

SG: 15; Bachelor's degree holder • Minimum of five (5) years exposure in implementing foreign-assisted projects • Experience in facilitating training, conferences and seminars • Ability to deal with cross-cultural differences • Proficiency in the application of relevant computer softwares • Familiarity in government accounting rules and procedures • Has good communication skills, written and oral; Completion of relevant trainings (120 hours)

1 Project Dev't. Officer I

SSG: 11; Bachelor's degree holder • Ability to deal with cross-cultural differences • Experience in facilitating trainings, conferences and seminars • Proficiency in the application of relevant computer softwares • Has good communication skills, written and oral.

1 Computer Operator III

SG: 12; Completion of at least two years college studies • Preferably with skills proficiency certification on the application and maintenance or relevant computer softwares as issued by the CSC • Ability to deal with cross-cultural differences • Has good communication skills, written and oral.

1 Driver II

SG: 3; At least high school graduate • Minimum of five (5) years driving experience • With professional driver's license • With 20-20 vision • Can undertake minor mechanical repairs of the vehicle.

1 Utility Worker II

SG: 3; At least high school graduate • Must know how to operate office machines.

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late BERNABE G. REYES at Meralco Employees Savings and Loan Association ("MESALA") Account Capital Contribution and Savings Deposit has been extrajudicially settled by his heirs w/ waiver as per Doc#301 Page#62 Book# II, Series of 2001 by notary public Rommel L. Yap of Pasig City PDI 12/14,21,28,2001

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

The heirs of the late JUAN A. SARMIENTO have executed a deed of extrajudicial partition w/ waiver of rights of his estate before Notary Public Patricio Boncayao Jr. of Muntinlupa City, under Doc. 304; Page 62; Book 49; Series of 2001.
(PDI-Dec. 7, 14 & 21, 2001)

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that Stock Cert. MERALCO A 149321, 230985, 402437, 501868, 575244, 541462, SMC A 01638219, 01616080, 99601147, 97502176, 96400892, 95297281, 94172868, PETRON A 282429,745782, 1253705, 1469640, under the name of Edna T. Mastrili ; ABS-CBN A 87473, SELECTA A 37457, PETRON A 145933, 745783, 1253706, 1469641, ROCKWELL 0088 under the name of Ronaldo P. Mastrili PETRON A 282428, under the of Norma Terencio If no contest is received new Cert. will be issued.
(PDI-Dec. 13, 20 & 27 2001)

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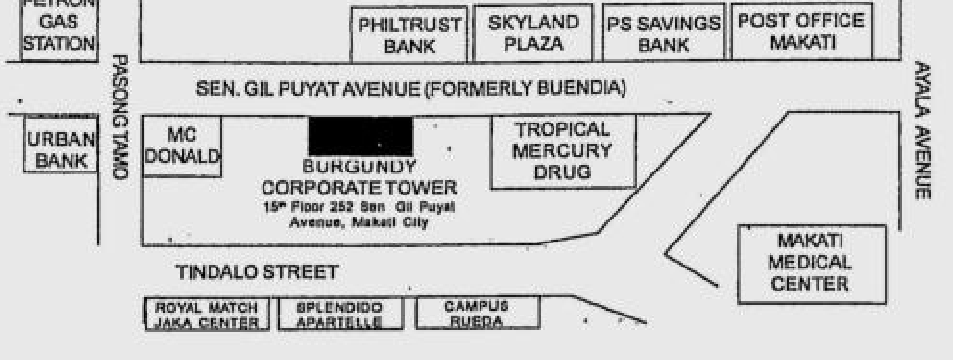

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R. I. P.

LUCINA MARIE C. PANER

of Chicago, Illinois and Calamba City (Laguna) joined her Creator on December 11, 2001 at the age of 55.

Her loving brothers **Leonardo** and **Popoy**; sisters **Lydia**, **Zeny** and **Hermy**; sisters-in-law **Adoracion** and **Amelia**; aunt, counsins, nieces and nephews, relatives and friends specially **Evelyn**, **Cynthia**, **Mitzh**, **Rodolfo**, **Virgil**, and **Mr.** and **Mrs. Larry Long**, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her mortal remains arrived on December 20, and will stay at her mother's residence at No. 8, San Juan Street.

Interment is set on Saturday, December 22 at the family graveyard, Calamba Catholic Cemetery after a 2:00 p.m. Mass at St. John the Baptist Parish Church, City of Calamba (Laguna).

NOLY SALUD VERENDIA PORTER

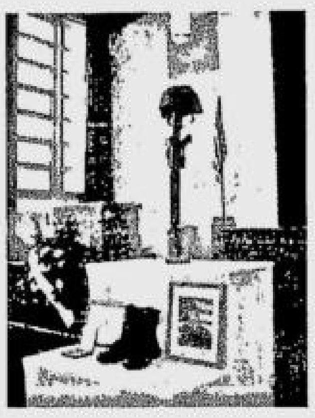
Died peacefully in the Grace of our Lord on December 19, 2001 at the age of 78.

Her love and affection will be most missed by her bereaved husband **ROBERT C. PORTER**; children **Rona** and **Naphar**, **James** and **Irene**, **Charles** and **Sonia**, and **Regina**; grandchildren **Randy**, **Aisa**, **Gayl**, **Michael**, **James Edward**, **Robert Andrew** and **Katherine**; sisters, in-laws, relatives and friends request for prayer for her eternal peace and happiness with our Lord.

Her remains lie in state at Loyola Memorial Chapel, Guadalupe, Makati City.

She will be laid to rest at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City on Saturday, December 22, 2001 after the 8:00 a.m. service at Loyola Memorial Chapel.

Pfc. Eduardo Jose Valencia Gueco Jr.



United States Army A Company 2nd Battalion
81st Armor Regiment 1st Armor Training Brigade

"Jody"

La Salle Greenhills H.S. '91
+Days with the Lord, San Francisco, CA
California Culinary Academy B & P '97
Peacefully joined his Creator on December 5, 2001
at Fort Knox, Kentucky U.S.A. in pursuit of his dream.
He was 28 years old.

His loving wife **Paula Rosella**; his loving parents **Ed** and **Jopee**; sister **Mymy** and brother **Jundy**; parents-in-law **Boy** and **Nieves Solana-Hamoy**; brother-in-law **Frankie**; grandmother **Carolina Feliciano Gueco**; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Sanctuario de San Jose, East Greenhills, Mandaluyong City.

Interment will be at the Hernandez Mausoleum, Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City on December 26, 2001 after the 10:00 a.m. Holy Mass.

> ***"I am the resurrection and the life.***
> ***He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies,***
> ***and whoever believes in Me will never die."***
>
> *John 11:25-26*

CLASSIFIEDS

PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION

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The Energy Company

PNPC Complex, Merritt Road
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Fax No. (632) 840-1459

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY

The **PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC)** invites interested Training Agencies which conduct in-house training and public seminars to pre-qualify for the:

2002 LOCAL MANPOWER TRAINING PROGRAMS OF PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION

As part of our commitment to continuously enhance the skills and expertise of our employees, the company seeks for Training and Development contractors which shall conduct the Technical and Core Training programs planned for the year 2002.

Pre-qualification documents shall be available for issuance at the above address starting **December 26, 2001.** Deadline for submission of complete pre-qualification requirements shall be on **January 25, 2001.**

PNOC EC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality, or to accept such bids or to award any part thereof to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered most advantageous to **PNOC EC.**

(Sgd.) **RICARDO S. BASALLO, JR.**
Chairman, Contracts Award Committee

(PDI – Dec. 21, 2001)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The public is hereby informed that Ms. **DIANALYN DE LUNA ASPIRAS** of Block 3 Lot 2 Teresa Park Subdivision, Pilar Village, Las Piñas City, whose picture appears above has ceased to be employed by BASF Philippines, Inc. effective 01 July 2001. She is facing 50 counts of ESTAFA before the Regional Trial Court of Calamba City in criminal cases nos. 9029-2001-C to 9078-2001-C.

Any transaction which may have been entered into by Ms. Aspiras purportedly in behalf of the company after said date shall no longer be honored.

BASF Philippines, Inc.
#103 Progress Avenue GIZ
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(PDI – Dec. 21, 2001)

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INQUIRER

TRiViA

By BONG BARRAMEDA

'Silent Night'

'Silent Night,' the favorite Christmas hymn, was born by accident. It was created for an emergency, and owes its very existence to the proverbial, but in this case very real, church mice. On Christmas eve of 1818, Father Joséf Mohr, the assistant priest of the Austrian village of Oberndorf, was preparing his church for the solemn midnight Mass. To his consternation he discovered that the organ was out of order. Looking for the cause, he found that part of its leather bellows had been eaten away by mice. Time was too short to have the damage repaired. Something had to take the place of organ music. He had written a Christmas poem that he now rushed to Franz Gruber, the local schoolmaster, who, like himself, played the guitar. Mohr asked him if he could quickly set his poem to music, so that it would be ready that very night. He should do so for two solo voices to be accompanied by guitars. Gruber gladly obliged. It took him a few hours to compose the tune that was to conquer the world. 'Silent Night' was thus sung for the first time on the very night of its rapid composition—by the two men in that little village.

For the Record. *Ang Pasko Ay Sumapit* (Christmas Is Here), the all-time No. 1 Philippine Christmas carol, was originally a 1933 Cebuano song titled *Kasadya Ning Taknaa* (How Happy Is This Time), written by Mariano Vestil and composed by Vicente Rubi. It was created for a light musical play, first staged in the town of Old Open (now Lapu-Lapu City), which had a group of carolers singing the song to the jangle of softdrink crowns or *tansans*. Famed composer Levi Celerio later wrote the now familiar Tagalog lyrics.

Past Forward. This day in 1974: The breakup of the Beatles, the most successful singing group in music history, was legally consummated. It was a sour-note ending to a fabulous partnership that began in 1962 and which, to date, has sold over one billion discs and tapes.

WORD WATCH

Disco (dis koh) : from the French *discotheque*, 'a record library.'

PDI – December 21, 2001

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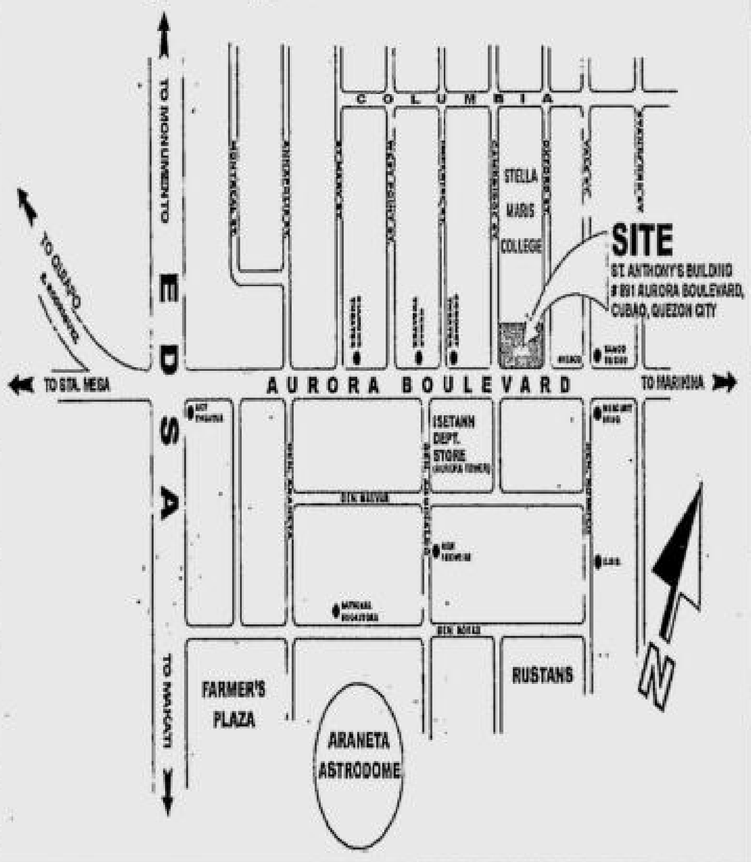


REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
Pambansang Korporasyon Sa Elektrisidad
(NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION)

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID AD NO. PD 2001-65

Bidding Date: January 24, 2002 - 10:00 AM
Pre-bid Conference: January 18, 2002 - 2:00 PM
(NPC Fiesta Hall Conference Room)

SUPPLY OF LABOR, TOOLS/EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES/MATERIALS AND SUPERVISION FOR JOBS RELATED TO JANITORIAL/LANDSCAPE AND INDOOR PLANTS MAINTENANCE SERVICES AT NPC-OBC, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY

Schedule I - Bidding No. 1
Schedule II - Bidding No. 2 and Training Center Bldg.
Schedule III - Power Management Center and Auxiliary Bldg.
Schedule IV - Landscape/Indoor Plants Maintenance Services

Interested parties are invited to apply for eligibility and to submit sealed bids on the above to be opened publicly at the NPC Fiesta Hall, Conference Room, NPC-OBC, Quezon Avenue cor. Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City.

Eligibility forms/documents are available on **January 2-4, 2002** at the Accreditation, Bidding and IT Services, Materials Management Department, Ground Floor, Bldg. 2 upon payment of P500.00 which is non-refundable. Last day of submission of application for eligibility forms/documents is on **January 10, 2002.**

Issuance of eligibility forms/documents mornings only, 8:30 to 11:30 AM. For inquiries please call No. 921-25-74.

The Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, waive any defect therein and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation.

PBAC-JANITORIAL/LANDSCAPE & INDOOR PLANTS MAINTENANCE SERVICES
NPC-OBC (Head Office)
Diliman, Quezon City

(PDI – Dec. 21 & 27, 2001)

People, Events & Products

ARIES B. ESPINOSA, Assistant Editor
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Murdoch University graduates visit GMA

LAST Dec. 13, the graduating class of Murdoch University's Manila MBA Program paid a courtesy call to President Macapagal Arroyo in Malacañang Palace. Australian Ambassador to the Philippines, John Buckley presided the formal induction of the officers of Murdoch Business Club (the Philippine Chapter of the Murdoch's Alumni Association).

Ambassador Buckley gave a brief background on Murdoch University, a leading research-based university in Western Australia, while Tony Esteban discussed the unique features of the program which include the flying in of international professors to teach alongside leading local professors over a 15-month period. Since classes are held on weekends, students do not have to stop work to earn their international degree.

Gerry Cruzabra, the newly inducted president of the Murdoch Business Club, delivered a message to the President, expressing the students' commitment to nation building in a rapidly globalizing world and expressed the students' confidence in the administration's management team.

Cruzabra extends his invitation to other Murdoch University graduates who wish to join the Murdoch Business Club and others who may want to find out more about the MBA program. For more information, call Erwin Acosta or Neil Obach at 844-2812 or 887-6390.

MURDOCH MBA GRADS AT THE PALACE

MBA graduates of Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia, paid a courtesy call on President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo recently to brief her on the ongoing Murdoch Manila MBA program under the aegis of the Esteban School. Australian Ambassador John Buckley was also present to induct the officers and members of the Murdoch Business Club led by its president Jerry Cruzabra. Shown are (from left) Rene R. Reinoso, Dominic Mascriñas, Jay Juan, Jennifer Bufi, Jeanne Cuña, professor Jan Shepard, professor Dan Principe, commissioner Cynthia Carrion, Diane Blacow, Eleanor Esteban, Ambassador John Buckley, President Macapagal-Arroyo, Antonio Esteban, Sr., Jerry Cruzabra, Tony Esteban, Froilan Tejada, Donald Lim, Eusebio Lipnica, Earl Montero, Roger Carino, David Perez, Neil Obach and Erwin Acosta of the Esteban School.

GMA MEETS MURDOCH MBA GRADUATES

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo welcomes Murdoch University MBA graduates Jeanne Cuña and Rachelle Ng (extreme left) during a courtesy call in Malacañang recently. Looking on is Australian Ambassador John Buckley who also led the oathtaking of the officers and members of the Murdoch Business Club.

Philips exec receives Juran Medal

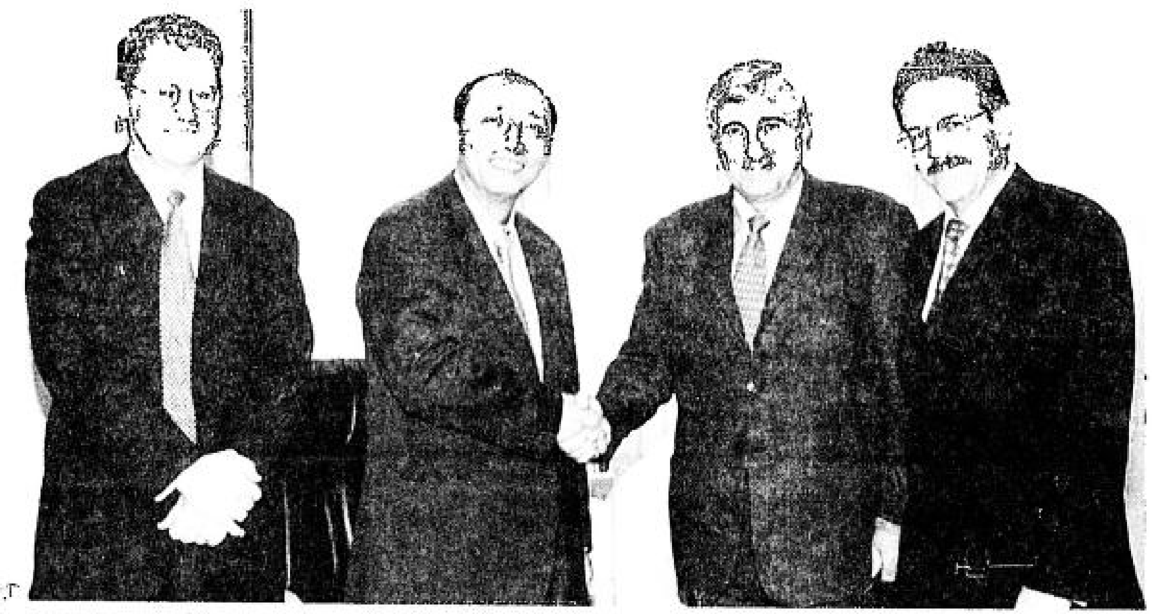
PHILIPS Semiconductors Phil. Inc. (PSPI) general manager Georges Bobin was chosen as this year's recipient of the distinguished Juran Medal, an award given by the Philippine Society for Quality Inc. (PSQ). The award recognizes the rare breed of senior executives who lead the quality transformation of their organizations.

PSQ is a non-stock, non-profit organization established in 1969 that has laid down the groundwork for setting up a quality control organization that can serve as a catalyst for action in the application of quality management. The Juran Award was named after Dr. Joseph M. Juran, an authority acknowledged worlwide for his extensive contribution to quality management. Over last 70 years, Juran and Dr. W. Edwards Demiing were instrumental in shaping management ideas about quality that have altered the manufacturing industry around the world.

Bobin is the sixth recipient of the award since its inception in 1995. PSQ president Jun Cabochan lauded Bobin for leading PSPI's organizational management quality initiatives that include the Philippine Quality Award (Level II) as well as being instrumental in coaching Philips in achieving several major awards and recognition like the QS 9000 certification, ISO 14001 certification, Philips Global Quality Award of the '90s and the Philips Quality Improvement Award.

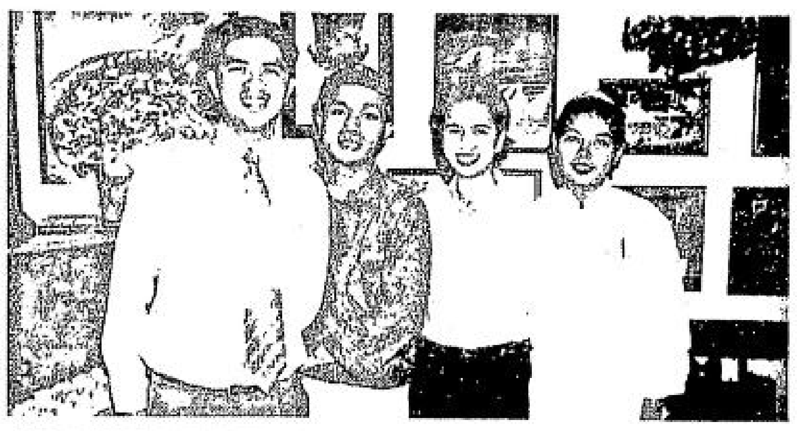
Under Bobin's leadership, PSPI achieved a business growth of 10 to 20 percent from 1997 to 2000, despite the effects of the Asian financial crisis. According to Bobin, "We used a team-based approach and embarked on the successful implementation of Small Business Units (SBUs) wherein each unit is accountable to its financial and operational performance resulting to positive responses from customers. I also made it a point to personally supervise each management team member to achieve his or her personal competencies.''

The improvement in business performance of PSPI encouraged its parent company in the Netherlands to expand its Philippine operations where a new 9,000-sqm state-of-the-art facility was recently established to house the increase in volume of new product lines. Moreover, Philips Philippines was recently named as one of the top 10 best employers in the country in a study done by Hewitt Associates, a global management consulting and outsourcing firm, with The Asian Wall Street Journal and Far Eastern Economic Review.



SMART SIGNS $10-M LOAN AGREEMENT

Wireless services leader Smart Communications Inc. has recently signed a $10-million master credit agreement to finance its acquisition of digital microwave radio equipment from electronics maker Siemens. Arranged by Credit Lyonnais, the loan facility will enable Smart to accelerate the expansion of its nationwide digital cellular network to meet the requirements of its rapidly growing subscriber base. Shown is Smart CEO and president Napoleon Nazareno (center, left) sealing the deal with a handshake from Credit Lyonnais general manager Pierre Eymery (center, right). With them are Smart chief financial adviser Peter Lawrence (left) and Siemens CEO Hans Weckherlin (right).



ALL SET FOR ITALIANNI'S BAKERY IN ALABANG

Italianni's Bakery and Café makes sure that its patrons in the south enjoy great American-Italian dishes and baked goodies this Holiday season with today's opening of its newest branch at the Corte Delas Palmas of Alabang Town Center. Italianni's general manager Amy Dizon (third from left) and supervisors (from left) Angelo Allauigan, Jude Oposa and Danessa Sombilon will oversee the cafe's operations. The café carries Italianni's signature old world charm with sepia photographs and mirrors festooned on walls and darkwood furniture – making it a cozy and inviting place to unwind with family and friends. It can comfortable seat 80 guests in its quaint setting, while 24 guests can enjoy the same ambiance in the patio dining area. Italianni's Bakery and Café's maiden branch is located at the second level of Glorietta IV, Makati City. Soon to open is Italianni's Restaurant at the new Greenbelt Mall.

Vitamins now available nationwide by mail

VITAMINS, medicinal herbs and other nutritional supplements can now be delivered nationwide by mail or courier, according to Uptrend Health Center. Among the supplements available are multivitamins, calcium, fish oil, *ampalaya*, ginkgo biloba, grapeseed extract, chitosan, glutathione, coenzyme Q 10, glucosamine and spirulina. Because there is no overhead for store space and sales staff, the prices of the food supplements are lower.

Also available are pamphlets and books on natural remedies for arthritis, osteoporosis, hypertension, diabetes, insomnia, high cholesterol, obesity, low libido, menopausal problems, ulcers, enlarged prostate and atherosclerosis. To get a product list, call 928-3464 or e-mail uptrend@pacific.net.ph.

Disney on Ice tickets now on sale

GET ready to be part of a magical moment in entertainment history when Disney on Ice celebrates 100 Years of Disney Magic at the Araneta Coliseum beginning Dec. 22 to Jan. 6.

Enjoy Walt Disney's unforgettable stories and captivating characters that have entertained families the world over a century now. This once-in-a-lifetime celebration features everyone's Disney's favorites, including Mickey, Minnie, Pinnochio, Jiminy Cricket, Buzz Lightyear, Woody, the Mouseketeers and so many more.

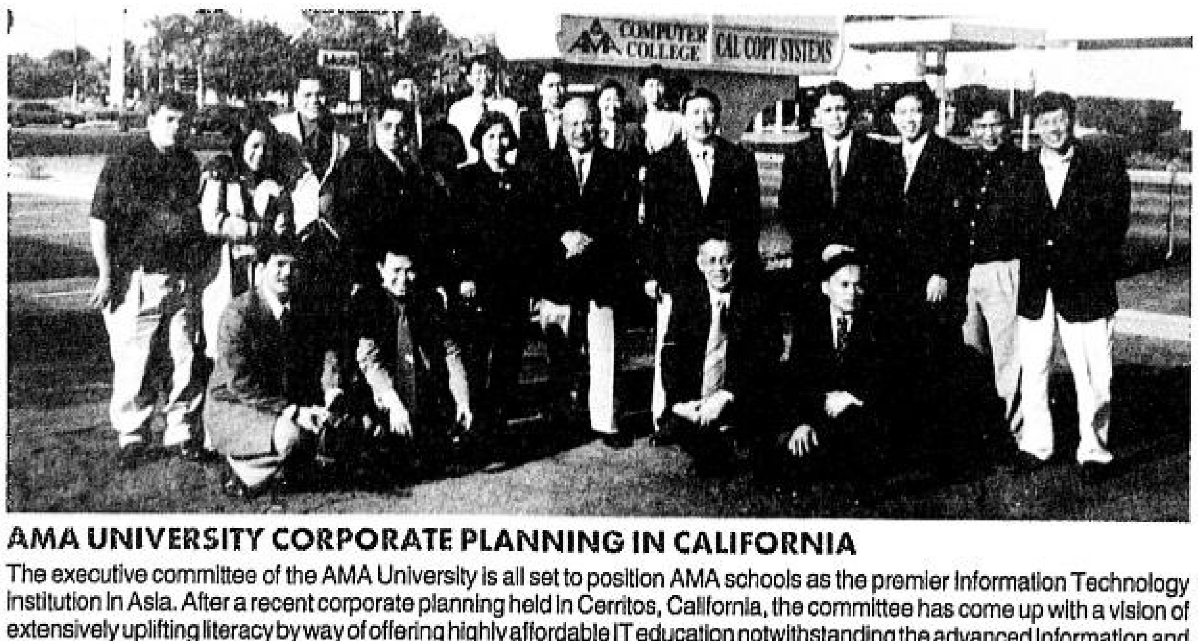
And for the very first time on ice, enchanting moments from "Mulan", "A Bug's Life" and "The Lion King" will keep you enthralled. Beautifully choreographed figure skating, tremendous production numbers and well-loved songs will bring fond memories of Disney to life right before your very eyes.

Share this skating spectacular with your friends and family as Mickey and the gang take you on a whirlwind tour of many of your favorite Disney adventures. Tickets are now available at all SM Ticketnet outlets. Major sponsors include Lactum, AIG Credit Card, the Manila Bulletin, McDonalds, 89.9 DWTM, 99.5 RT, 103.5 K-Lite, City Lite 88.3 and Wave FM, Edsa Shangri-Hotel, SkyCable and also supported by the SM Supermalls.

To discover more about Disney On Ice, log on to www.DisneyOnIce.com.

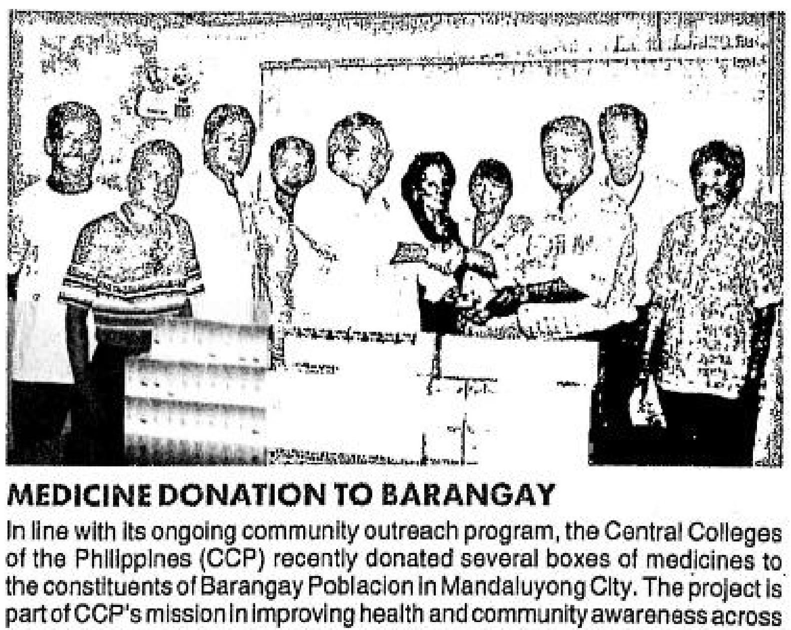
DIMAYUGA AWARDED DEAN EMERITUS

In solemn ceremonies Fr. Tamerlane R. Lana, O.P., rector of the University of Santo Tomas, reads the citation awarding to Dr. Amado L. Dimayuga the title of Dean Emeritus of the 274-year-old UST Faculty of Law. Witnessing the rites are (from left) dean Jaime M. Lantin, children Amado Paolo and Bernadette, wife Estrella C. Dimayuga, Fr. Juan Ponce, O.P., vice rector Fr. Braulio Peña, O.P., regent and Fr. Winston M. Cabading, O.P., secretary general.



AMA UNIVERSITY CORPORATE PLANNING IN CALIFORNIA

The executive committee of the AMA University is all set to position AMA schools as the premier Information Technology institution in Asia. After a recent corporate planning held in Cerritos, California, the committee has come up with a vision of extensively uplifting literacy by way of offering highly affordable IT education notwithstanding the advanced Information and Communication Technology grounded on its every curriculum. Shown are (fifth from left, second row standing) Dr. Amable R. Aguiluz V, AMA founder and chair, EVP Manuel F. Abad (center), and other members of the executive committee.



MEDICINE DONATION TO BARANGAY

In line with its ongoing community outreach program, the Central Colleges of the Philippines (CCP) recently donated several boxes of medicines to the constituents of Barangay Poblacion in Mandaluyong City. The project is part of CCP's mission in improving health and community awareness across the metropolis. Shown is CCP president lawyer Crispino P. Reyes (fifth from left) with barangay captain Jun Resngit (third from right) during the turnover ceremony. Also shown are (from left) barangay tanod Aris Albaran, treasurer Herminio Cortez, 'kagawads' Philip Santos and Ernesto Rivera, CCP's Dr. Elena Reyes, Dr. Ellen Salac and Nel Buenaventura and Dr. Lourdes Sabile.

Whom do you deal with in the BIR?

By Ma. Nora M. Nora-Manalo
SGV & Co.

TaX-FILES

IF you are going to transact business with the Bureau of Internal Revenue, do you always have to deal with the commissioner of BIR himself?

To expedite matters, the commissioner delegates his powers to other high-ranking officials of the bureau.

The commissioner, however, is prohibited by law from delegating four powers:

1. The power to recommend the promulgation of rules and regulations by the secretary of finance.

2. The power to issue rulings of first impression (i.e., those without precedents) or to reverse, revoke or modify, any existing ruling of the bureau.

3. The power to compromise or abate any tax liability in general.

4. The power to assign or reassign internal revenue officers to establishments where articles subject to excise tax are produced or kept.

Regional directors and the assistant commissioner, legal service, are currently authorized to sign and issue rulings/actions with established precedents under the guidelines issued by the commissioner.

The commissioner is also delegated the authority to the assistant commissioner, collection service, to do certain acts relative to tax credit certificates.

Power of revenue directors to sign rulings/actions

All regional directors, including those who are in acting capacity, are given authority to sign the following rulings to taxpayers under their respective jurisdiction pursuant to Revenue Memorandum Circular No. 3-2001:

a) Tax exemption on the sale or disposition of principal residence;

b) Tax exemption of corporations, including tax exemption of non-stock, non-profit educational institutions;

c) Tax exemptions of cooperatives;

d) Tax exemption of senior citizens;

e) Tax exemption of the National Housing Authority and private sector participating in socialized housing, including participants in community mortgage program;

f) Request for change of accounting period (but not change of accounting method);

g) Extension of time for the filing of estate tax return and payment of the estate tax;

h) Exemption from donor's tax;

i) Tax exemption of separation benefits of employees for any cause beyond their control;

j) Exemption from income tax and, consequently, from withholding tax of "De Minimis Benefits," including:

- Exemption from the withholding tax on wages for monetized 10-day vacation leave credits for employees of private entities.
- Exemption from the withholding tax on wages for monetized leave credits of government employees.

k) Tax treatment of transfer to the condominium corporation of the common areas of a condominium;

l) Use of loose-leaf invoices/receipts and books of accounts (manual).

The taxpayer must file his/her request for ruling/action with the regional director who has authority over the revenue district office where the taxpayer is registered to secure a valid ruling. However, if the taxpayer falls within the jurisdiction of the national office (such as, large taxpayers) and he/she seeks a ruling on any of the above topic, it is the assistant commissioner, legal service, who is authorized to sign the ruling.

Moreover, every request for ruling/action filed before the regional office shall be accompanied by a sworn statement on "non-forum shopping" stating that such request has not been filed or previously acted upon by the national office, signed by the taxpayer or his duly authorized representative.

Power of assistant commissioner, legal service, to sign rulings/actions

Under Revenue Memorandum Circular Nos. 39-2001 and 2-2001, the assistant commissioner, legal service, is also authorized to sign rulings and actions that are clearly covered by established guidelines, as well as pertinent BIR issuances on the subject, as follows:

a) Tax-deferred exchanges of property for shares under Section 40(C)(2) of the Tax Code;

b) Transfer of property by a pre-need corporation to a trustee;

c) Tax consequences of exchanges of properties to correct clear mistakes of facts relating to ownership of subdivision lots;

d) Joint ventures for real estate development where no cash advance or other payments are made to any co-venturer;

e) Exemption or taxability of gains from sale or transfer of shares of stock in domestic corporations by non-resident foreign corporations pursuant to applicable provisions of the tax treaties to which the Philippines is a signatory;

f) Taxability or exemption of income of a resident of a foreign country from independent personal services by virtue of a tax treaty;

g) Embassy requests, either for itself or on behalf of its employees, for tax exemption;

h) Tax exemption of income derived by foreign governments from their investments in the Philippines;

i) Tax exemption of interest or dividend income of such foreign government institutions as are specified in the tax treaties to which the Philippines is a signatory or in exchanges of letter between the government of the Philippines and the foreign government;

j) VAT exemption certificate for embassies;

k) Certificate of tax exemption for Asian Development Bank and other international organizations;

l) Certificate of residency issued in accordance with the provisions of tax treaties between the Philippines and other countries;

m) Certificate of registration as qualified donee institution;

n) Denial of claim for informer's award;

o) Issuance of disbursement voucher for the informer's reward duly approved by the secretary of finance;

p) Issuance of tax credit certificate or disbursement voucher for tax refund in compliance with the decision of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals and Court of Tax Appeals, which has become final and executory;

q) Request for tax exemption of reasonable private benefit plan;

r) Request for confirmation that the reasonable private benefit plan is still tax exempt despite amendments to its provisions;

s) Request for renewal or confirmation of tax exempt status of reasonable private benefit plan;

t) Request for rulings on topics covered by Revenue Memorandum Circular No. 3-2001 of taxpayers falling within the jurisdiction of the national office.

If a taxpayer believes that the ruling issued by the regional director or the assistant commissioner, legal service, is erroneous or the request remains unacted after the lapse of a reasonable period of time, he/she may appeal to the deputy commissioner, legal and inspection group, through the assistant commissioner, legal service, for appropriate action.

The commissioner or the deputy commissioner for legal and inspection group may reverse, revoke, modify or alter any such ruling issued by the regional office or the assistant commissioner, legal service, if he/she finds the same to be adverse with established precedent rulings.

However, a notice will be given to the taxpayer prior to the reversal, revocation, or modification of the ruling, which shall not be given retroactive effect as provided for in the Tax Code.

Power of assistant commissioner, collection service to act on certain documents

The authority to approve and sign the transfer, revalidation and/or conversion to cash of tax credit certificates is now with the assistant commissioner, collection service.

However, for the conversion of the tax credit certificate to cash, the assistant commissioner, financial and administrative service, must concur and sign.

Taking note of these developments is important so that the taxpayer will avoid any delay due to wrong filing of the request for ruling/action.

(For comments and suggestions, please send an e-mail to sgv mail@Andersen WO.)

Will spin doctors . . .

(From page B16)

ourselves available to customers and audiences which include the public fora and the media.

All these are my way of saying, again, that our business of PR consultancy will continue to do well in 2002.

My colleague, Rene Nieva, who owns and runs Perceptions (HKTA, Turner Entertainment and Cartoon Network, Business Software Alliance), agrees.

He singles out a good PR consultancy's ability to directly focus messages on clearly identified customers and key publics, resulting in cost efficiency, as a central advantage on our part.

"The Philippine is still an attractive area for foreign investments, especially in ICT, and we expect to be doing more work for more ICT companies doing business or contemplating to do business in the Philippines," Nieva says.

Nieva also believes that local PR consultancies are now able to offer a more varied range of services than they used to. He cites his firm's experience with Turner Entertainment as proof that marketing communication will continue to be a staple of PR practice in the country.

John Wells of Jackson Wells Morris, of NSW Australia, (our firm's partner in Pinnacle Worldwide, an organization of independent consultancies) offers a relevant point: PR firms tend to do more work for less. While this attitude was first a matter of need, it has now become a key advantage, enabling us, for instance, to go multitasking and make it work.

Wells points out that our business now offers a wider range of services, including new ones such as specialized counsel on cultural change and issues management.

I share Rene Nieva's optimism on Information and Communications Technology PR. The demand for this specialized service, here in the Philippines, comes not so much from the dotcoms, as from the established players who demand consistency, versatility, and value from all their business partners.

A PR firm that has been in business, say, for five years, will have shown the kind of values that will see it through the long term. It will have developed the kind of internal controls, overall discipline, and quality of service and commitment to ethics that win and keep clients' confidence.

One such PR firm is Fuentes Publicity Network, owned by Edd Fuentes, who continues to gain new accounts and generate new business in spite of what he admits to be budget cutbacks among some clients.

Fuentes reports that during the last quarter of 2001, his firm signed up three major accounts, garnered four new assignments from existing clients and as of this writing is due to formalize agreements with two new accounts for the first quarter of 2002.

"This just goes to show that a PR consultancy that has firmly established a reputation for good work will always survive and do well even in a bad economic situation," Fuentes says.

And we have the precious factor of credibility on our side, Anne Forrest, managing director of Golin/Harris Forrest (regional/global), reminds us, too.

Prospects

I also offer health care, crisis communications and internal communications as three other areas that will be in higher demand in 2002 and in the years ahead.

Health care graduated as a priority service item in the second half of the 1990s, when the limits to what advertising could do (e.g. with prescription drugs) became more pronounced.

Again, the point of Nieva—PR gives you focus and cost efficiency.

The influx of new drugs and pharmaceuticals, the growing aggressiveness of hospitals and HMOs, and the need for PR firms to help provide voice, access and presence to manufacturers and health care providers—and also the patients—augur well for our business.

Crisis PR should be made available only to certain kinds of clients—those who will be willing to invest time and resources and then agree to do the right thing, and only the right thing.

By internal communications, I refer no longer to communications materials alone, except when they are part of a larger issue, e.g., change management or culture change.

Business will be good for us independent Filipino PR consultancies.

In many cases, the growth of 2002 has begun. The region continues to come to us, seeking our help. As independents, we do what the global pros can't—service other PR firms and their clients.

My colleagues continue to develop new fields of expertise and build new models and standards of client servicing.

In the case of our firm, we have been setting up a second generation, precisely because the demand for a more diverse range of services—many of which they will have to develop themselves for the local and regional markets—will keep on growing.

To help us deliver quality to our market, another Pinnacle colleague, Yap Boh Tiong of Mileage Communications of Singapore (who, in spite of being an independent, has been buying up PR firms in the region, maybe half a dozen by now) sent me this set of tips:

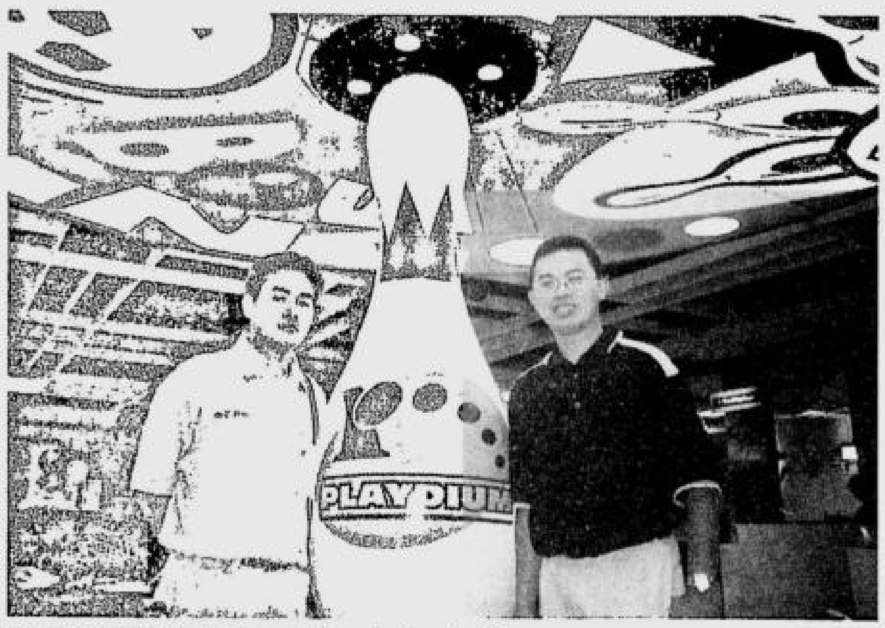
- **Give value to your customers.** When you consistently deliver on this premise, your clients will stick by you through thick and thin. If forced to cut budget, they will generally be reluctant or do so only as a last resort.
- **Watch your overheads.** A good company should always watch its costs at all times, not review them during the critical periods.
- **Monitor your debtors' list.** You have to monitor this list regularly. It is no use achieving sales and billings if you can't collect. In bad times, bad debts will mount and will be harder to collect.
- **Don't put all your eggs in one basket.** Offer a diversified portfolio. Work for industries/sectors that will consistently enjoy growth or at least stay buoyant, so that when one sector is down, you have the others to provide the cushion.

Mileage, Boh Tiong reports, has observed this formula rigidly. "That is why we thrived in the last recession. Even in these extremely challenging times, we are still able to cope despite client cutbacks and contract terminations," he adds.

We Filipino PR firms have survived with no foreign subsidy. We often use Western models, but we forge them in our own smithy. If we keep on leveraging on our advantages (the English language, a strong feel for the market, a global outlook, ability to attract imaginative and resourceful university-educated young people), we will be among the world's best. *(The author is president of Virtusio Public Relations Inc.)*

Customer orientation is key to car and sports ventures

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao



PLAYDIUM'S Chris Lim and Angelo Constantino.

SPORTS enthusiast Christopher T. Lim frequents bowling centers around Metro Manila, Quezon City and sometimes as far as Cainta at least two times a week to have a good game with friends or family.

Lim noticed during his frequent trips that he often had to wait several hours for his group's turn to bowl. This piqued the interest of the businessman in him, prompting the decision to put up his own bowling center to cater to the increasing number of bowling enthusiasts in the metropolis.

He took over his family's idle property near Araneta Avenue in Quezon City and transformed it into a bowling center with some of the latest bowling equipment. He says it was the only way to differentiate Playdium Bowling and Billiards from the other bowling centers, especially those in the malls.

"I have always been interested in sports. During my teenage years, I played basketball. However, due to basketball's physical demands and limitations, I was forced to find a new sport that would satisfy my thirst for challenge. My sister's friend introduced me to bowling two years ago. Since then I got hooked to the sport," the economics graduate says.

With its partner Brunswick, the largest manufacturer of recreational products in the United States, Playdium takes players into a new world of bowling.

"We are the first to' offer the Frameworx touchscreen scoring system technology and sleek furniture in the country that blends breakthrough electronics with the science of ergonomics," Lim says.

Aside from Frameworx, Playdium also boasts of the new GSS Series Pinsetters, that accurately counts the players' score; Pro Anvilanes, synthetic lanes with markings designed to help bowlers score higher and a 35" television screen to show the players' scores.

To appeal to the younger crowd, Playdium offers glow-in-the dark bowling.

Every Saturday, Playdium transforms itself into a disco area with luminous pins and balls, lanes and even the tables.

Lim says a bowling center is good investment these days because it appeals to players from all ages and backgrounds.

In the United States, he says, the popularity of bowling continues to mount despite an economic slowdown. It is said to be one of the most popular participation sports in the United States, according to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association.

"Bowling is perhaps the only sport that can be enjoyed by both families and *barkadas* from all ages. We have bowlers from 5 years old to 70. It's an indoor recreational sport which you can enjoy playing even by yourself, anytime of the day," adds Playdium center manager Angelo Constantino.

Lim considers Constantino perfect for the job as he needed someone who can promote the center and entice bowlers to join its leagues and tournaments.

Constantino knows the bowling business, having been a member of the Philippine National Bowling Team from 1988-1998. He also won two gold medals in the World Youth Bowling in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1992, a silver medal in the 1994 Asian Games and two gold medals in the 1995 South East Asian games.

Lim says the Playdium center is his business venture outside the family business of auto supply, although he is still very much involved as manager of his parent's business.

"In the mornings I am there at the motor shop and in the evenings I go to Playdium. I do not find it difficult to do both because both are customer-oriented. I get to meet different kinds of people and they both require class A service," he says.

Lim says his main goal with Playdium is to provide a venue where even professional players can come and have a good time.

FCB creates own Christmas giveaway

FCB Manila, the fastest growing advertising agency in the country, scored another first with the release of its Christmas CD. Produced by FCB creative head Dennis Garcia, the album consists of traditional Christmas songs and two original tunes written by Dennis—a multi-awarded songwriter and founder of the legendary band Hotdog. The uniqueness of the album lies in the fact that all the tracks were performed solely by FCB employees. Even FCB chair Babe Romualdez and president Arnold Liong are featured performers.

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MARGIE QUIMPO-ESPINO, Business Features Editor

Will the spin doctors stay healthy in 2002?

BY ROMEO P. VIRTUSIO

THE AUTHOR

EDD FUENTES

RENE NIEVA

SOMETIME in November, I got a poignant e-mail note from an editor of a regional publication to whom we had been pitching stories over the past couple of years. Ordinarily, she said, your note would have delighted me, except that we will not be here anymore; we have just closed shop.

A few weeks later, another young lady, from Singapore, with whom we had worked extremely well on a PR project, sent in a note in the same vein: In a couple of days, I will be out of here, I don't know where I shall be.

The related businesses of media, advertising and communications, from what you read of developments in the region, are having a hard time: smaller ad revenues, dolefully lower billings, aggressive downsizing and strategic cutting down of costs.

In the process, people are let go.

PR market

PR consultancy, certainly a poor relation to media and advertising, ought to be going through dolorous times, too, and bracing up for more difficulties next year, and the next.

We in the PR consultancy business are the external counselors, and are not to be confused with those who provide counsel from the inside (corporations, organizations, agencies, etc.).

We are a business, highly competitive, vying for the kind of market that foreigners tend to scoff at for its minuscule size.

Most of us are Filipino-owned, although there are a few who have foreign equity. We survive mainly on fees.

Twisting in the wind

So will we be twisting in the wind in 2002?

The impact of Sept. 11, the specter of Mindanao, the brutal reality of kidnapping and murder, tourists and investors who will refuse to come, in spite of promises, imports that will push locally produced items off the shelves . . .

Our take should be when times are hard and the forecasts are grim, we in the PR business will also be hit hard.

PR and the economy

That would be fine except that it flies in the face of established fact. From what I know, and I have been here a very long time, the state of the economy and the state of our business, such as it is, have not been necessarily that closely intertwined.

A distressed or besieged economy keeps you vigilant, but it need not drag you down with it. On the contrary, you tend to rise above it, because hard times and challenges tend to bring out the best in you.

In the '80s, the most malevolent years of martial law, the PR agency that I was working in would have its best annual results, making enough to keep around 20 people. We kept winning new accounts and generating new business from clients.

When we went to put up our own in 1989, along with everybody else, we faced the uncertainty of the restoration and then the vicious coups d'état, and yet we did extremely well through this period.

Nor did we blink at the impact of July 1997. Along with our fellow PR firms, we just dug in, taking on assignments of various kinds—small, big, long-term, short-term, foreign, local.

In all instances, we saw two features of the PR consultancy business at work.

First, ours is largely an idea kind of business. We are not compelled to be as large as an advertising agency, which must employ more people to create advertising campaigns.

With smallness come fleetness, versatility and manageable overheads. Small, you can plan strategically, define your playing field, plot your directions and act decisively.

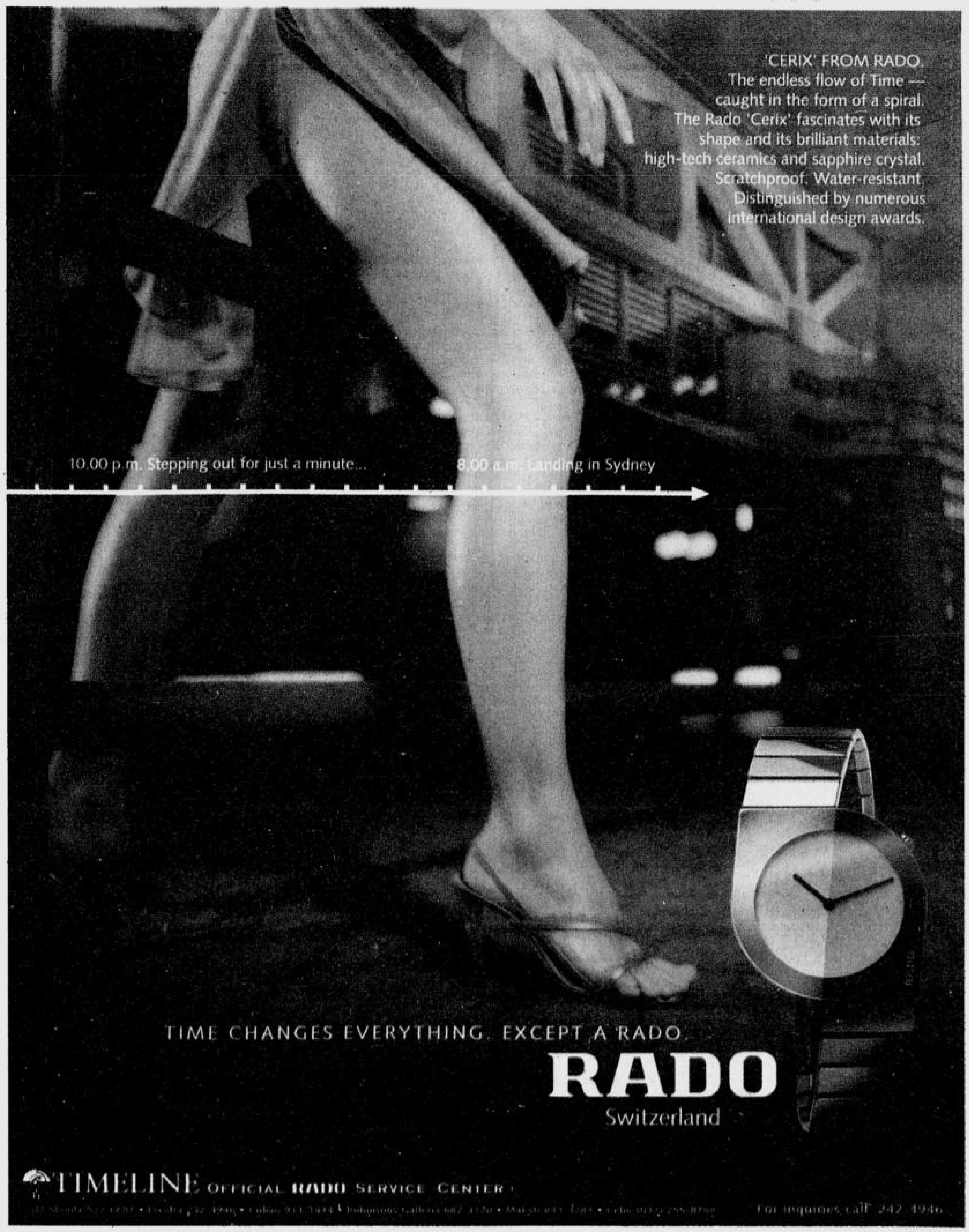
Then also, the '90s saw the increased convergence, as it were, of the disciplines of advertising and PR as forces of marketing. Never before had we been in more urgent demand to serve clients in tandem with advertising, as part of the integrated marketing communication matrix.

Sub-specialties

Marketing PR now calls for sub-specialties. After you fill the basic need, you must look for where the superior value lies, for your client and you.

It was through these three periods of bad economy that we formulated a mantra that has worked well with us and our clients: As long as we have not decided to close shop, we have to be out there in the market, pitching and making

WILL/ B15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Per DTI-NCR permit no. 2071, series of 2001.

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LIFESTYLE

CHELO BANAL-FORMOSO, Editor
MARGE C. ENRIQUEZ, Subsection Editor

Home

A Christmas village, if there was one

BY ALEX Y. VERGARA
PHOTOS BY MIKE ALQUINTO

NOW we know how Peter Pan must have felt as he flew above London one fine evening. The eternal boy and his friends John, Michael and Wendy had the time of their lives as they gazed with awe at steep roofs, Lilliputian houses and dazzling city lights that beckoned from below. This scene from the classic children's fairytale came to mind as we delighted in the sights and, yes, sounds that came from Suzette Sambile Villadolid's Christmas village.

Friends and relatives, whether young or old, have again started trooping to the family residence in Quezon City to experience the season's magic through miniature pieces Suzette, with ample help from brother Rosen Sambile, his wife Teza and handyman Rufino "Rufing" Flores, painstakingly grouped together and assembled.

The main living room has been cleared of furniture to make way for the Yuletide ensemble, which reminds us of a quaint Swiss or English village complete with miniature cable cars, frozen ponds and slopes with human figures frolicking on the "ice" and "snow." Suzette, however, insists that her creation is a true-blue American village, what with such symbols as a Starbucks café and a Coca-Cola neon sign glowing in the dark.

The group has been at it for four years now, but every year has proved to be more ambitious than the last. In other words, every year promises to be an entirely different setup since Suzette keeps adding to her burgeoning collection. Thus,

A CHRISTMAS/ p.C2

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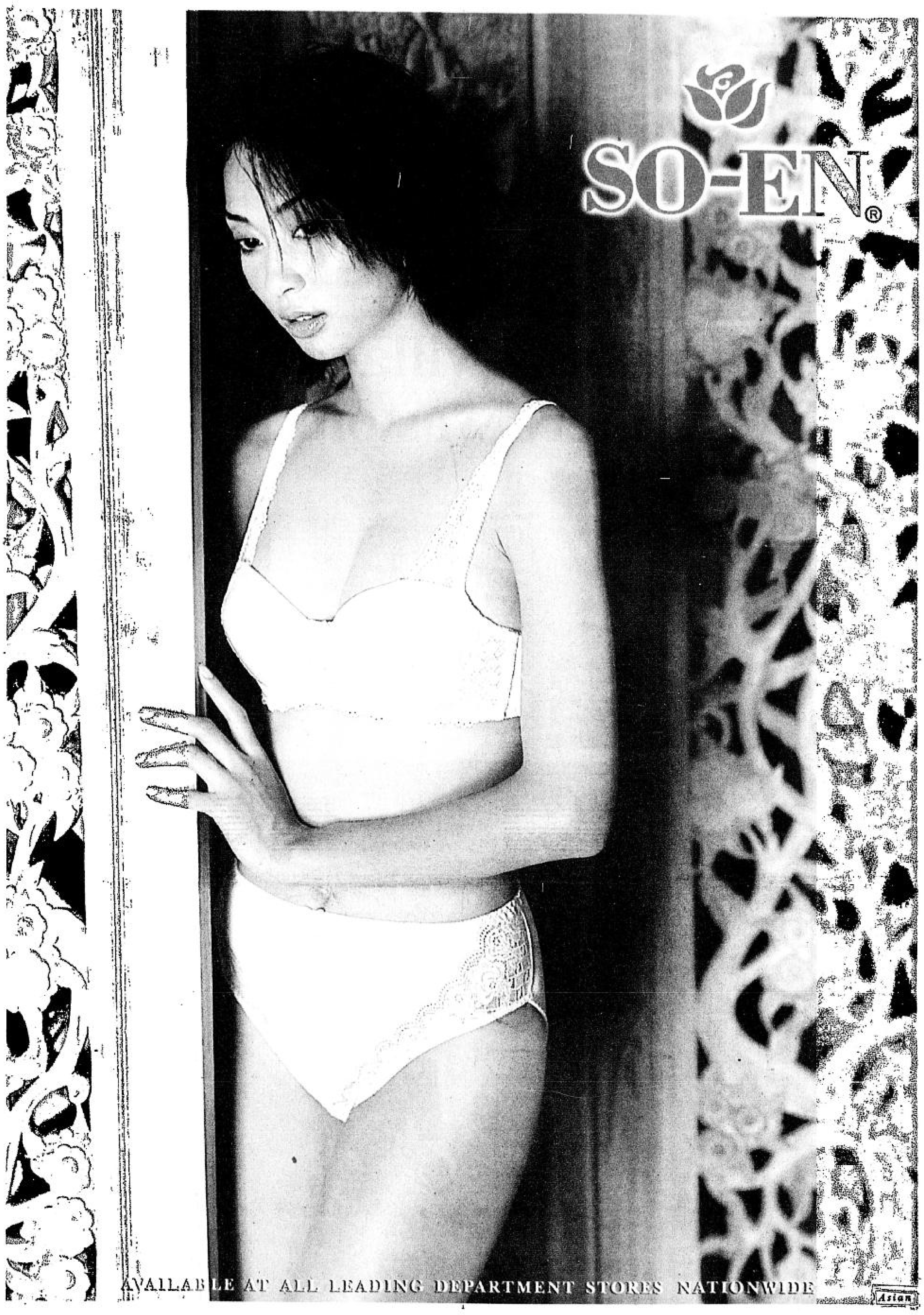
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SMART
Simply Amazing!

WINTER WONDERLAND. Suzette Sambile Villadolid's idea of a Christmas village with pointed roofs, spinning carousels and snowy peaks.

MODERN-DAY icons such as Starbucks add realism to the miniature village, layered and proportioned for a three-dimensional effect.

A Christmas village, if there was one

ANIMATED touches such as cable cars and dancing figures make the village come alive.

(From page C1)

it took them twice the amount of time to finish this year's edition.

"It took us almost two months to finish the job," says Suzette. It would have taken them longer hadn't Suzette's mom Charito nagged them whenever they slackened up. Suzette, who's married and has two kids, had to drive almost everyday to her parents' La Vista residence from her home in Valle Verde to work on the project. "My mom monitored us like factory workers," she says with a chuckle. "Perhaps more than anyone else, she wanted the village to be finished in time for Christmas."

The group began working the first week of October, first by gathering all the pieces, improvising and discussing among themselves as they went along. Yes, they didn't rely on sketches and models since none of them studied architecture or fine arts. But through sheer determination and an innate artistic sense, they were able to transform their vision into reality before December rolled in. "Experience also helped a lot," says Suzette. "We learned through years of trial and error."

Collecting

Suzette started collecting model houses, shops and various structures with matching human figures made of plastic sometime in 1995. But it wasn't until three years and 50 structures later that she began to set them up. Her search for ideal pieces has taken her to several local factories that make them for export. Instead of shopping for clothes like most women do, Suzette usually spends her money beefing up her collection. She scours malls and outlet stores here and abroad in search of novelty shops that sell such pieces.

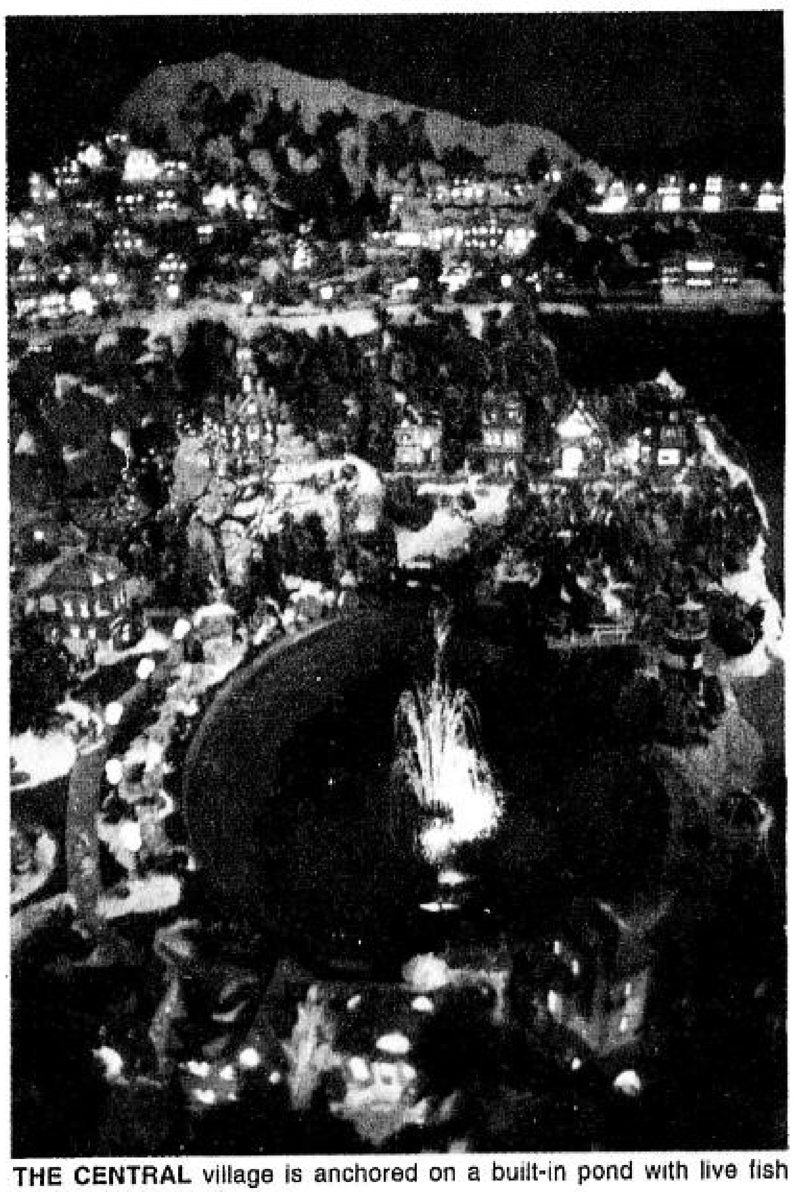
"I've lost count already," she says, when we asked her how many pieces she has amassed through the years. "But the pieces you see right now could easily add up to 150." That number excludes human figures, plazas, railroad tracks, lampposts, Christmas trees (there are at least six) and other accessories such as roads, bridges, tunnels and sidewalks she and her collaborators carefully fashioned by hand. They also labored on hundreds of faux pine trees and snow made from white granules that have now coagulated, thanks to wallpaper glue. Christmas tunes simultaneously emanate from certain "neighborhoods." Several smoking mechanisms are attached to the houses' chimneys, thus adding a sense of realism to Suzette's winter wonderland.

"We're getting better by the year," Suzette says with a chuckle. "I think we did a really good job with the snow and certain landscapes made from papier maché, vinyl tiles, Boracay sand, pebbles and ordinary garden rocks." Suzette can only smile as she recalls how they have to endure scratches, burns and calluses as they worked on such details.

Suzette has likewise never bothered to monitor how much she has spent on her expensive hobby. "I

A CHRISTMAS/ p.C3

Suzette Sambile Villadolid has put the miniature houses she has acquired through the years to good use by arranging them into a cluster of villages throbbing with the sheen of Christmas



THE CENTRAL village is anchored on a built-in pond with live fish and a mini fountain.

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A Christmas village, if there was one

(From page C2)

don't like making an accounting because I'd faint if I did," she says. "I just think of ways to better enjoy and share my collection with others." There are still a number of pieces left in her parents' attic, but she has saved them for next year.

The Christmas villages are grouped into three areas, each with a number of featured attractions. Sure, the miniature houses and buildings lit inside and outside are already attractions in themselves. The presence of animated or moving pieces makes the two setups more alive. They're best seen through the eyes of a child, says Rosen, who advised us to sit down or squat on the floor to better appreciate the details.

The village by the living room walls, for instance, features a vintage train set that slices through the village and runs through several tunnels. It's not unusual for kids to touch the candy-colored houses as they get drawn to them, but it could get problematic once the speeding toy train catches their fancy. It was derailed several Christmases ago soon after it grazed an eager boy's hand. The problem was that it happened not outside but in the middle of the 6-ft tunnel.

If it weren't for Mang Rufing, the train would have been stuck there until January. The man responsible for the display's electrical installations had to rip off part of the "landscape" to extract the stalled locomotive.

Head-turning attractions

What about the one in the middle of the living room? It has its share of head-turning attractions as well, primarily a built-in pond with live fish and a mini fountain. The central village also features Suzette's favorite piece, a church on top of a hill. Somewhere at the foot of the hill is an amusement park bordered by tiny *banderitas* and featuring several revolving carousels and a McDonald's restaurant. No sign of either Karen or Gina here.

Indeed, aside from the their attention to details, Suzette and company also considered layering and proportion. A three-dimensional effect is achieved as varying sizes of structures ascend the "mountains." The bigger ones have been placed in front, while smaller ones, grouped behind.

Most important, Suzette paid homage to the Christ Child through a Middle Eastern village—complete with miniature camels, shepherds and palm trees—that hugs one of the living room's pillars. The latest addition features the Nativity scene set atop a spruced up papier maché hill. Unlike the two other attractions, Suzette didn't accumulate this one through the years. "I bought them all at the same time."

Suzette would have loved to come up with a Philippine Christmas village, complete with *nipa* huts, churchgoers and vendors cooking traditional native *kakanin* such as *bibingka* and *puto bumbong*. "It would be too costly and time-consuming to do so," she says, "since no company has yet produced native figures and houses."

For all the time and effort that went into this year's display, Suzette is aware that this year's edition, like in previous years, has to fold up soon after the holidays draw to a close. Although she has learned to accept such a development with equanimity in the past, her friends and relatives had felt bad every time she started dismantling the pieces.

"I don't feel sad at all because it [Christmas village] has brought me as well as others so much joy," she says. "Well, probably I'll feel bad this time since it has been so much harder and has taken us longer to do. I'm sure others will again beg us not to dismantle it." Like Peter Pan, there's a child in every one of us that gets fascinated by miniature slices of life.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

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Verita	P 698,000	P 29,084

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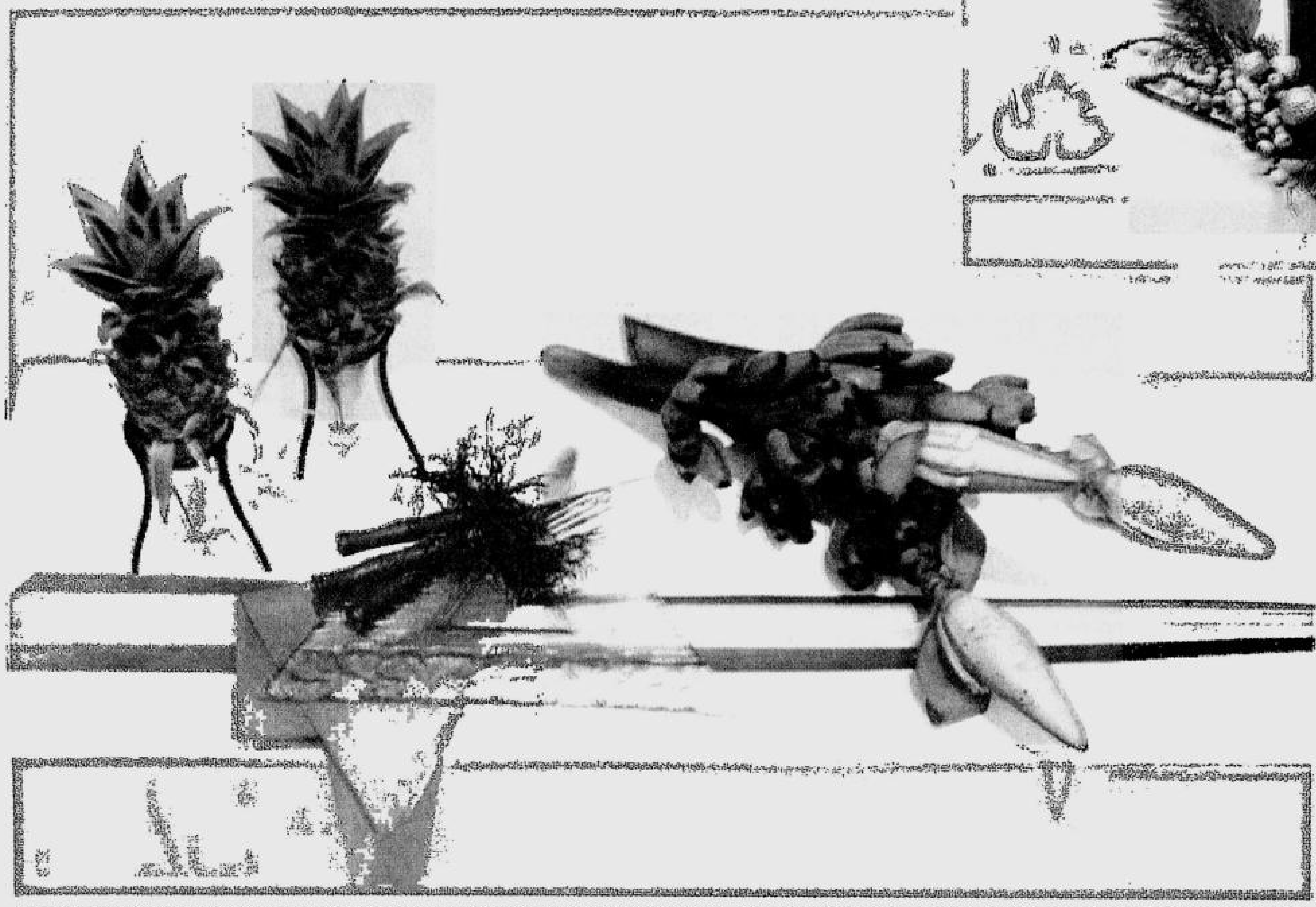
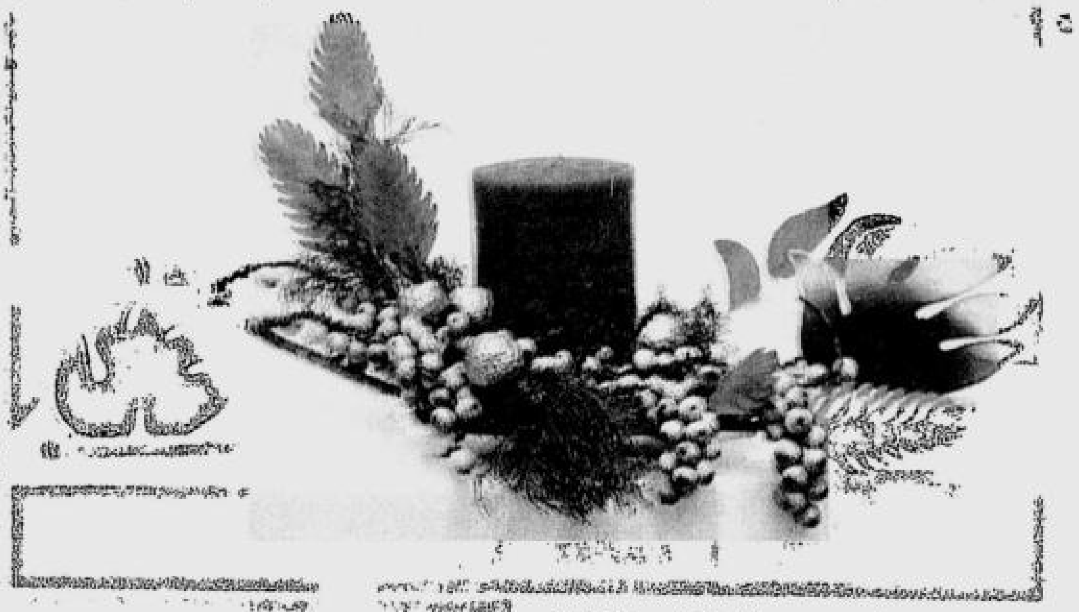


CHRISTMAS dinner centerpiece is made of cut ornamental pink banana fruit and heart, and pink pineapples on glass scones resting on a sparse pandal leaf. Flatware is tied by fragrant cypress. Plate by Bobby Castillo



JUMBO red Christmas candle on a square oriental dish rests on calamus palm fruits and gilt fruits of another palm, *Aechmea* Christine flowers and fragrant cypress. Flame glassworks by Noell El Farol

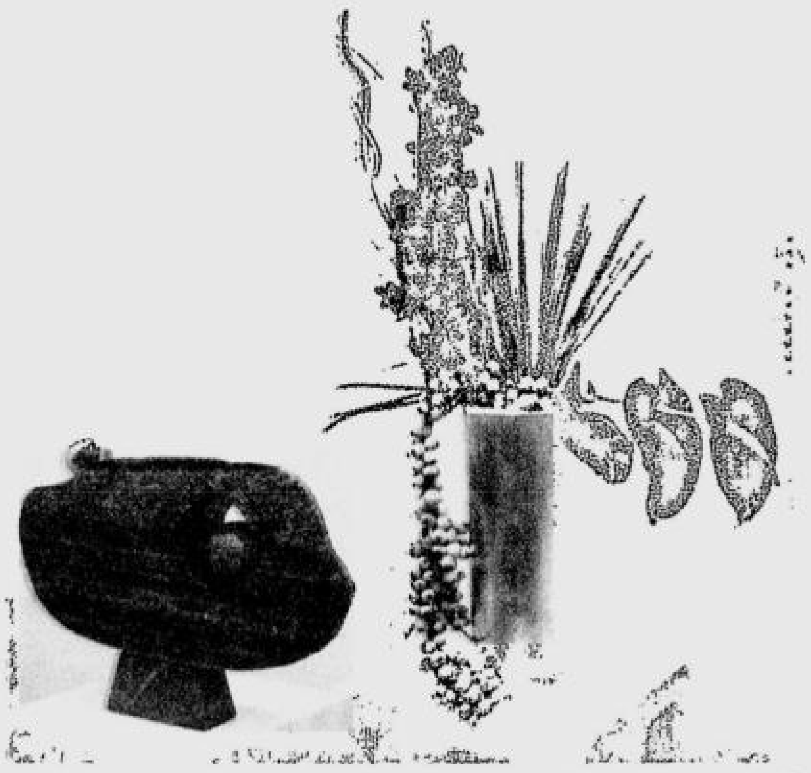
Sprays of simplicity

PHOTOS BY CHITO VECINA
VISUAL CONCEPT: ALBERT AVELLANA

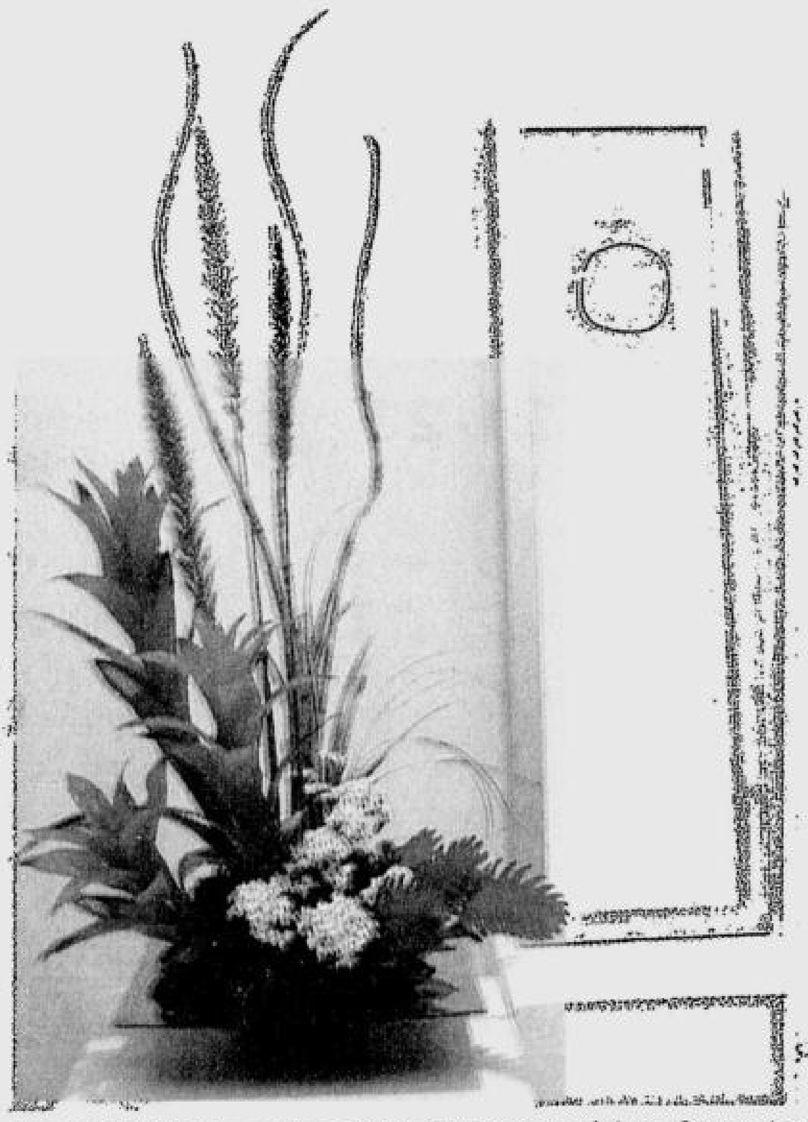
ASK a florist to make a Christmas floral arrangement and chances are he'll go over the top. It's typical of the flamboyant nature of the Filipino to razzle-dazzle.

Tony Padilla of Floral Designs sticks to simplicity. For the INQUIRER pictorial he favored the Oriental minimalist look, inspired by the principles of the ikebana wherein the materials, not masses of flowers, are made to speak for themselves.

Padilla's arrangements are quiet and contemplative, much like the true sprit of the season.



TALL arrangement in gold vase. This modern setup plays on vertical and horizontal elements. It features gilt curly willow, red Christie low orchids, three red anthuriums, a cascade of calamus palm fruits and a burst of dracaena foliage. Stone sculpture is by Honrado Fernandez.



ARRANGEMENT in golden square dish consists of three Guzmania "cherry" flowers, three *Aechmea* Christine flowers topped with three curly costus stems and three grass inflorescence and wild Australian flowers. Painting by Lao Lian Ben

FLORAL DESIGNS, LKV BUILDING, CORNER MAKATI AVENUE
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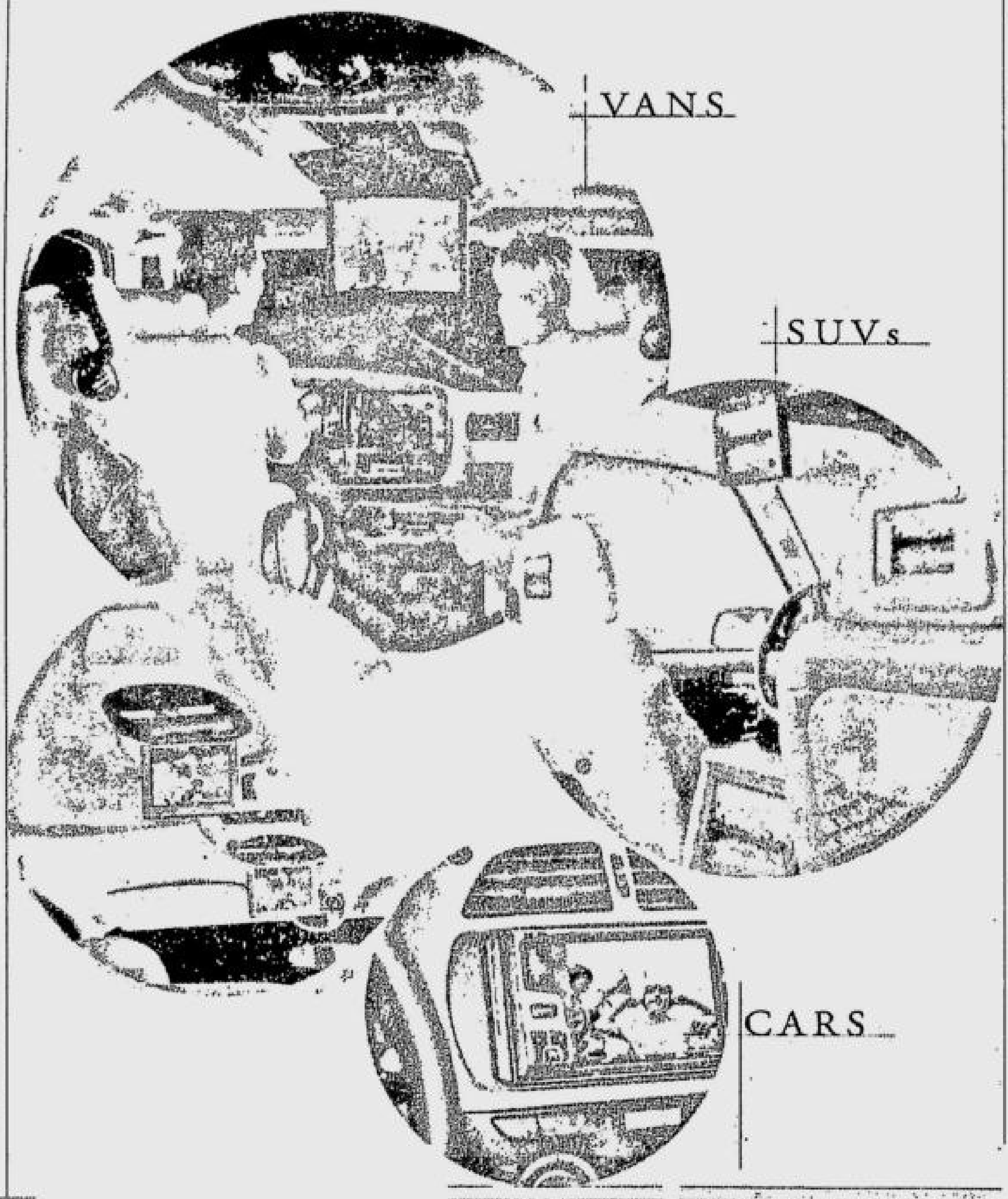

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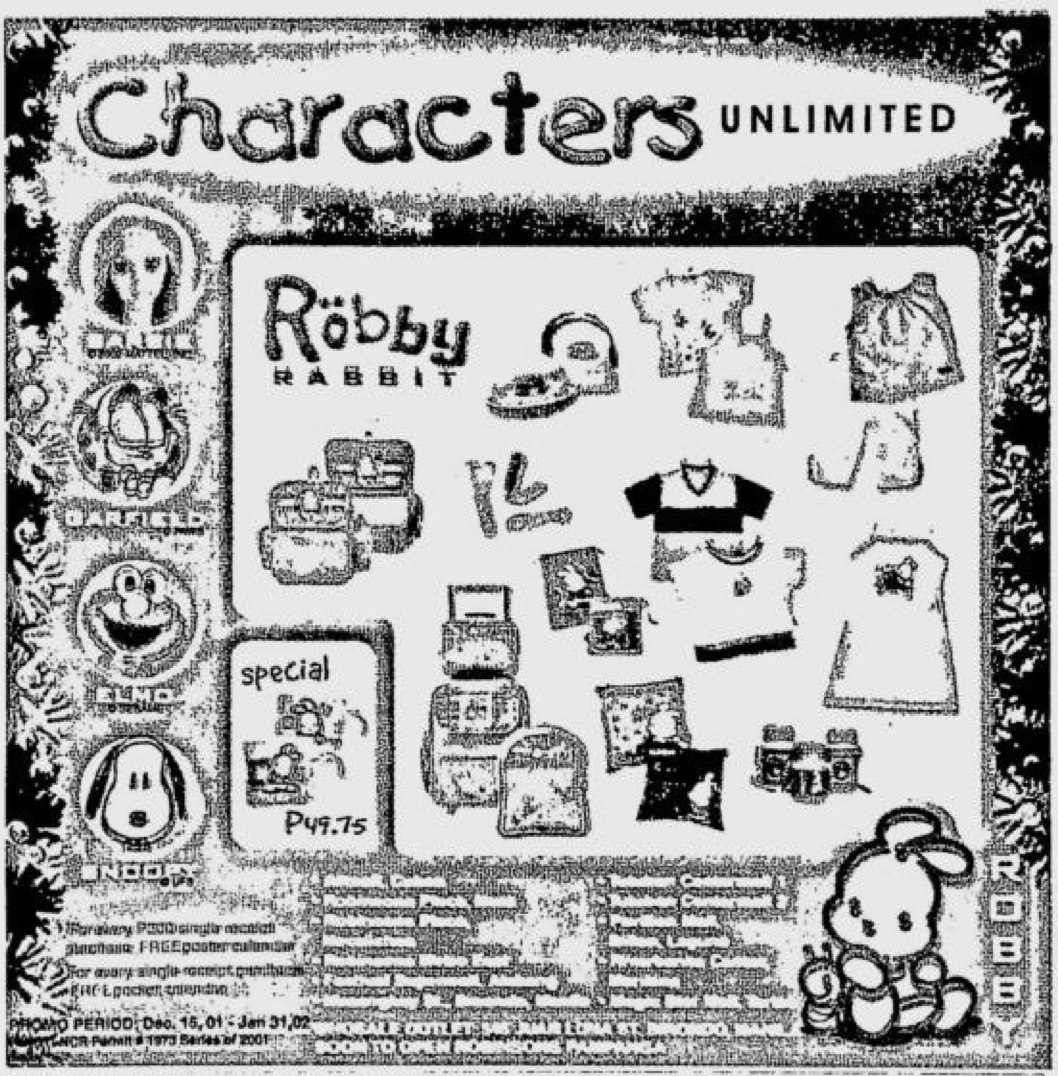
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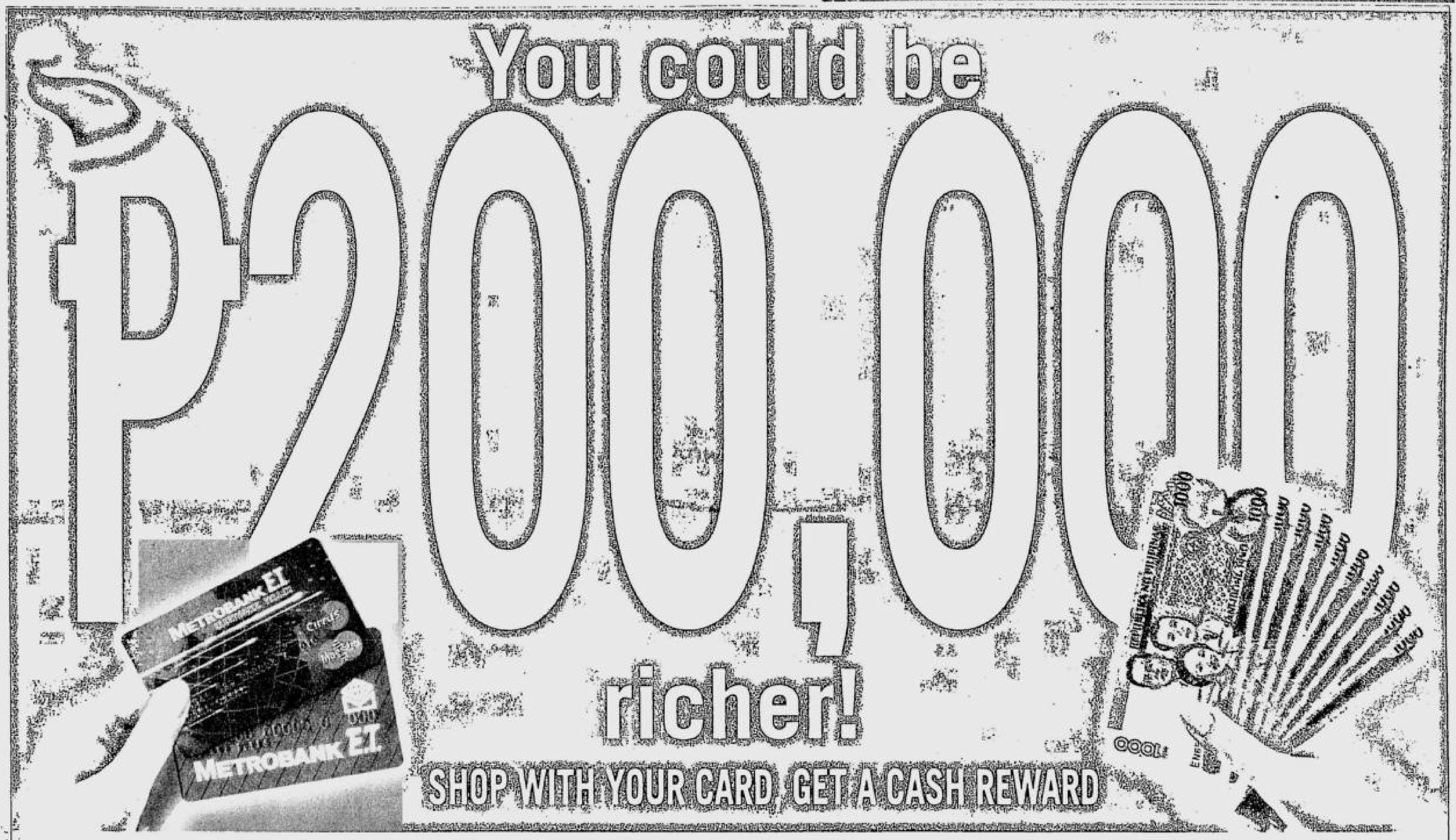
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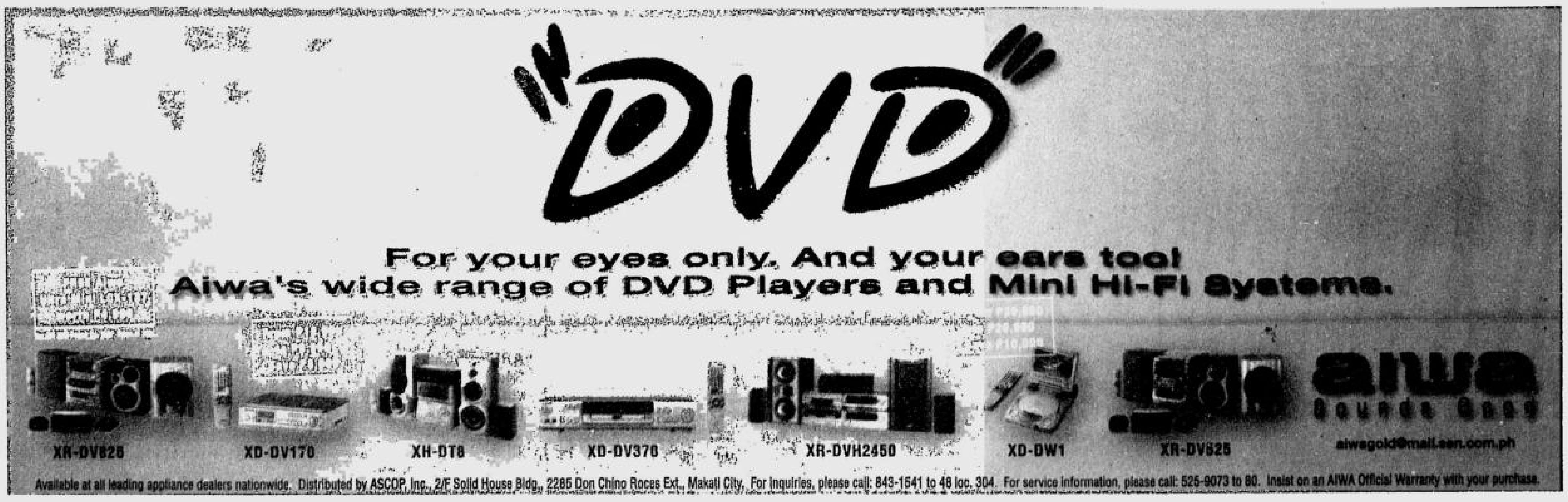
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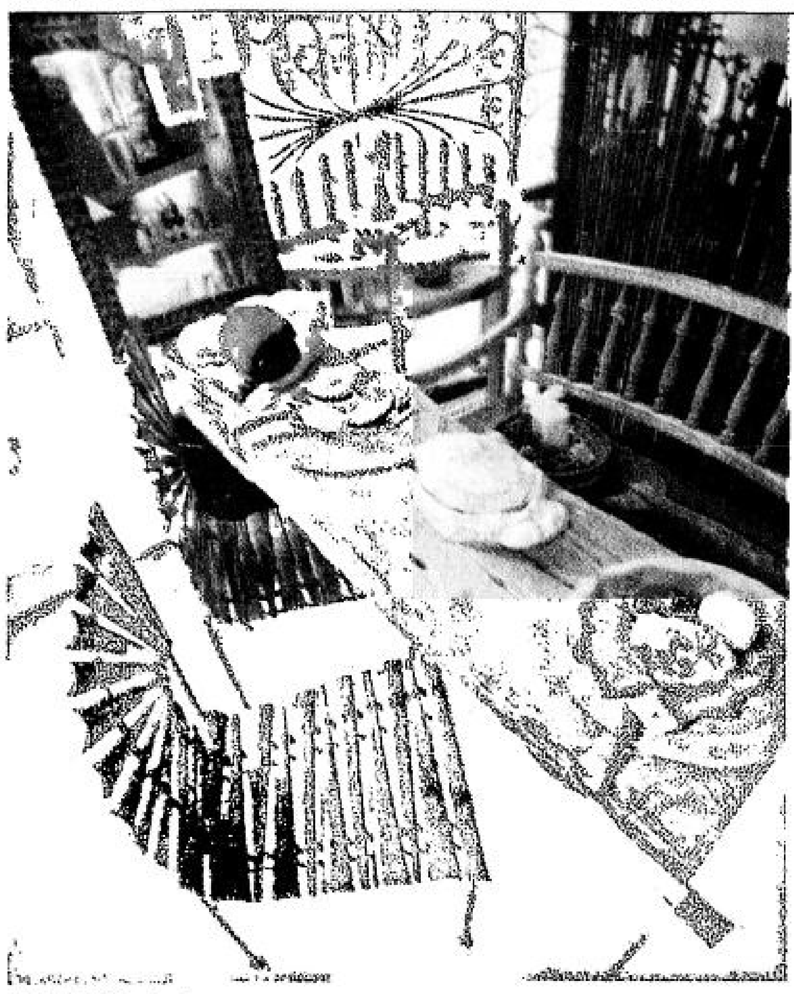
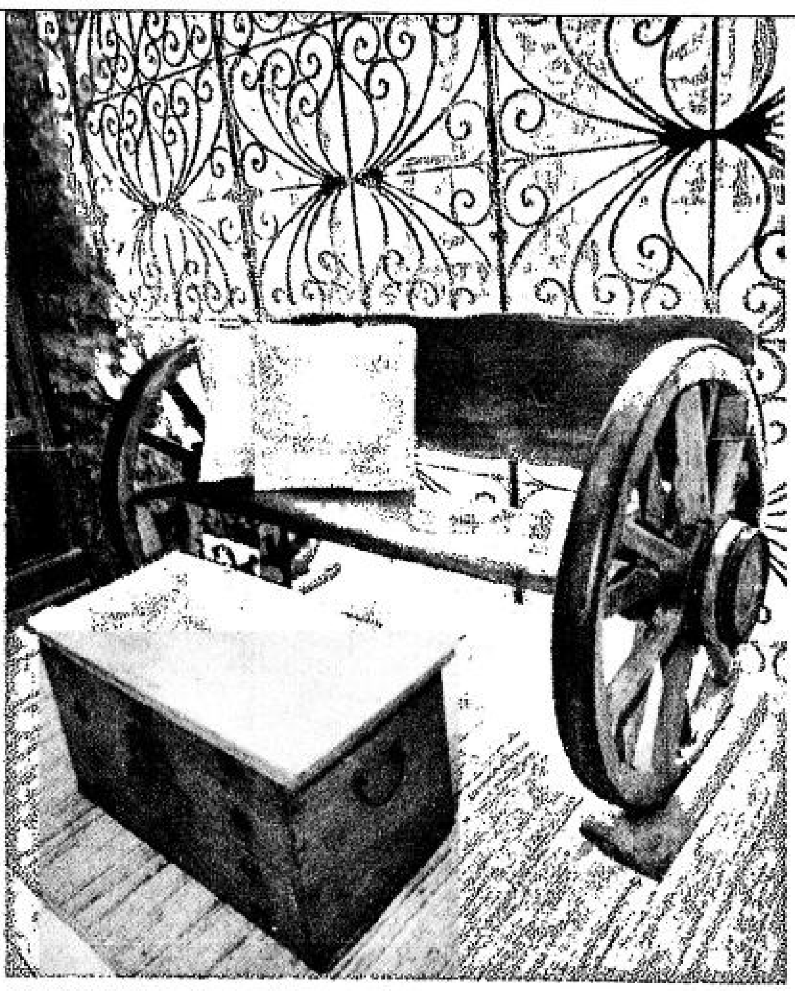


BAMBOO chair inspired by the fan. Old *travesia* is made into a bar.



KARITON becomes a three-seater.

THE CHAIR that looks like a fish spine

Lonely–but cool–Planet

A design house that has diversified to shirts, accessories and furnishings has combined vernacular materials and textures with a modern sensibility. Boracay tourists are snapping up the items

BY MARGE C. ENRIQUEZ
PHOTOS BY BOBOT MERU

IN THE HEART of Boracay's commercial district by the seafront, there's some serious shopping at the Lonely Planet lifestyle store.

It sounds as if the name was lifted from a series of books titled "Lonely Planet." After all, the concept was derived from the travels of the owner and financier Virgilio Sacdalan and his business partner, designer Ronaldo Bugay. Lonely Planet is a call for the preservation and recycling of resources. The houseware store is quite literally made from the earth. Local materials such as wood, wicker, shell, raffia, terra cotta and native paper are combined with modern elements such as metal and glass. The furnishings advocate an earth-friendly lifestyle.

When Sacdalan was given a modest space at the Gaisano Mall in Davao City, he was inspired by the concept of earth preservation. Bugay, an interior design graduate of the University of Santo Tomas, helped him with the designs. At first they produced T-shirts that evoked colors of the earth such as amber, olive and terra cotta; their designs also evoked the colors of the sea and sky. The shirts were adorned with seeds and other natural materials. The graphic designs featured nature and ethnic motifs as well as slogans for nurturing the earth.

Diversification

Over time Lonely Planet diversified into home furnishing and accessories.

Two years ago, Lonely Planet branched into Boracay island. It provides 70 percent of the shirts sold in the *talipapa*. Then it opened a T-shirt store and a 200-sq-m space at D-Mall D'Boracay. The business partners wanted to show an upscale furniture line that was world-class. The place consists of household vignettes such as a bar area, living room and artist's corner.

"We wanted to focus on what's Pinoy. It's supposed to be of high quality and out of the ordinary," says Bugay. Surprisingly, foreign tourists started ordering big-ticket items at the Lonely Planet and having them shipped. The partners even had offers for partnerships in Europe.

Bugay says the store's concept is evolving. "We want to stretch the limits of the Filipino imagination." He isn't bothered when tourists take videos of the store. It's impossible to duplicate the Pinoy handiwork, he says. He believes that the store should be a center of ideas.

There are crazy things there such as a chandelier made from 12 bulbs that are mixed with bamboo nodes (snapped up immediately by a tourist). The store even made variations of a *caritela* into a sala set.

Lonely Planet also has a T-shirt store near El Nido, Palawan. Because of its success, Lonely Planet was invited to produce a lifestyle exhibit at the Padre Faura wing of Robinsons Ermita.

RED CORNER. This Oriental Red Room features a *kariton* turned into sofa bed. Instead of the clichéd fountain and aquarium, water gurgles from a motorized bathtub with koi fish in the water to provide prosperity vibes. Driftwood softens the lighting design.

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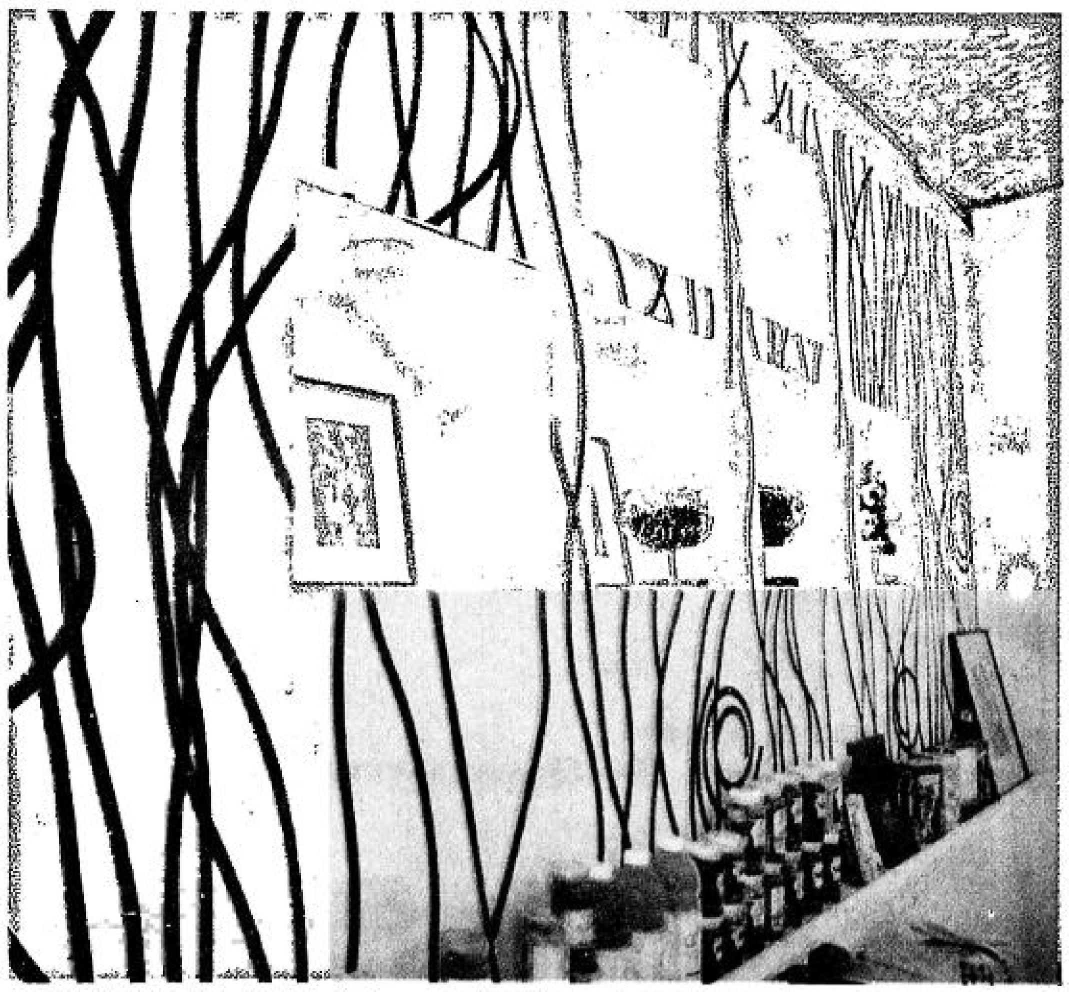
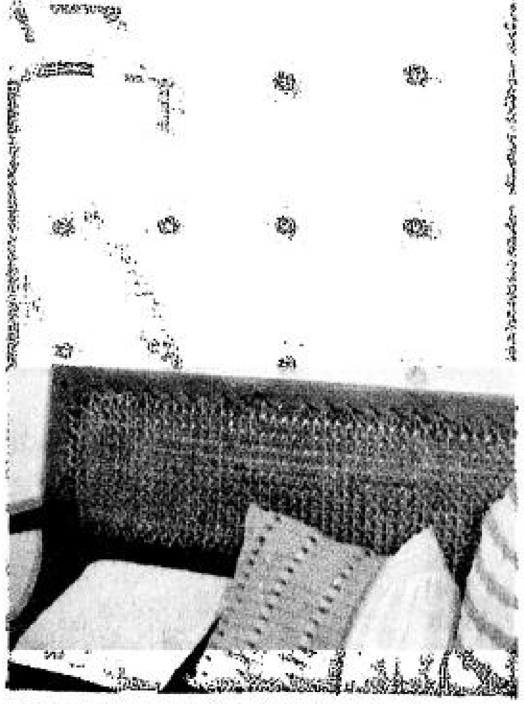


INSTEAD of a flat white wall, the room is enlivened with black masking tape creating unusual patterns.



ARTISTS' rooms featuring patterns made from cutouts of bamboo nodes as a wall treatment.

AN OLD boat from Baguio floats on a pedestal with metal trimmings. The *moribana* arrangement is accented with twigs from Iloilo with glass leaves suspended.

He loves his brother's sister-in-law

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Tita Dulce

DEAR Tita Dulce,

I'm an accountant in a government corporation. Six months ago I met the sister of my brother's wife who is only 18 and in college. We became good friends and I've become strongly in love with her.

My problem is I'm already 40 years old and I'm ashamed to reveal my feelings to her. I'm also worried about my brother's reaction if he found out how I felt toward his sister-in-law.

What should I do?

MON

I know no legal, religious or moral reason for your brother to object to your courting his sister-in-law. Courting her might cause him a little unease, though, since she and you are both "family" to him. But I'm sure he'll quickly come around to the fact that the restrictions that apply to him in his relations with his wife's relatives do not apply to you and his sister-in-law.

However, it would be awkward for everyone in your family and hers—particularly during get-togethers hosted by your brother—if you courted her and she turned you down. They will get over that eventually, but it will likely take longer for you and her to recover from the embarrassment. If you really love her, though, it will all be worth it.

Talk to your brother now about your feelings and intentions for his sister-in-law. Know, however, that when you do that, you're letting the cat out of the bag; he'll likely (and he should) tell his wife about it, and his wife will probably let her family know, too.

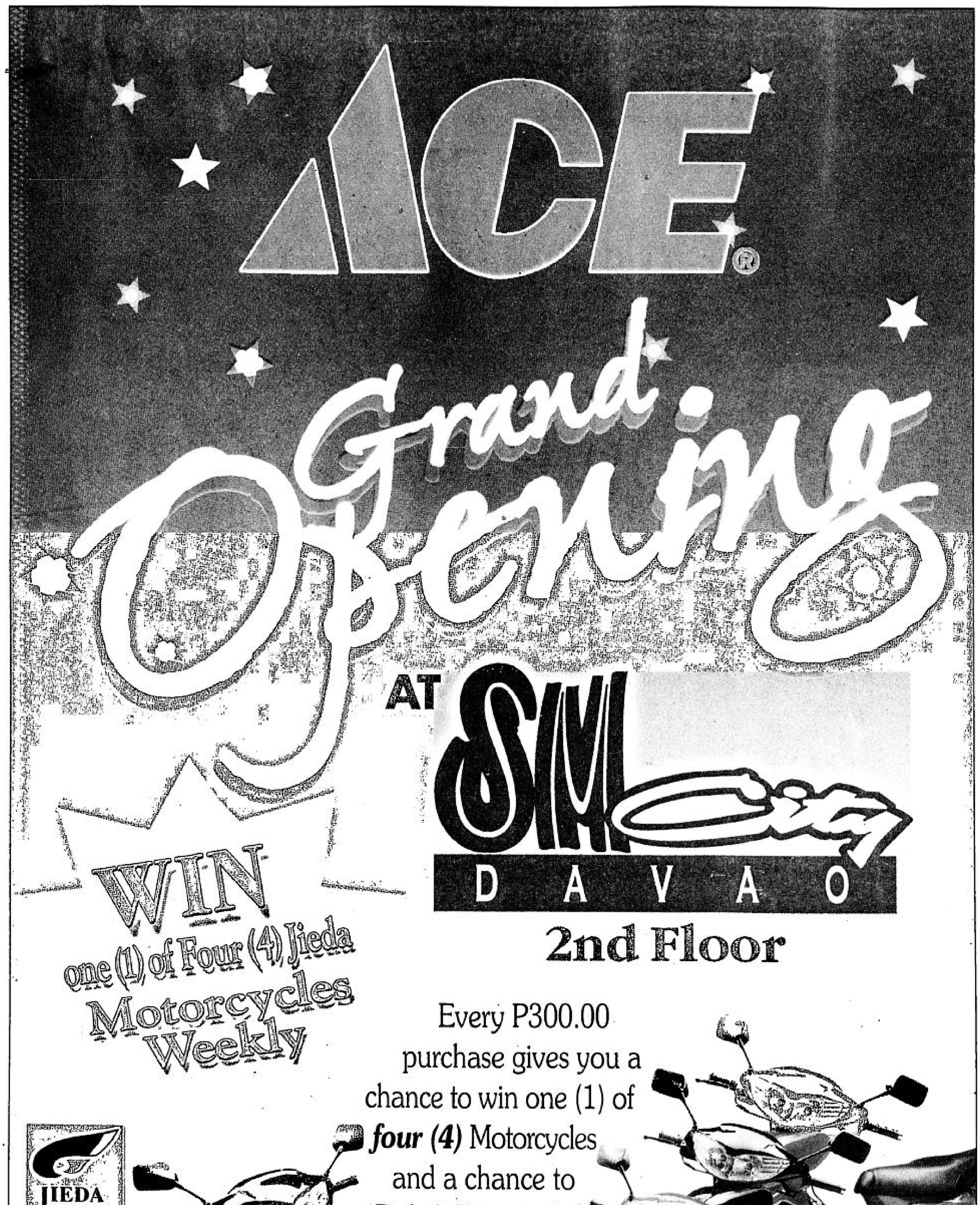
The link between your families might even be a plus factor: you wouldn't be bursting into the scene like a mushroom after the rains. She and her relatives would already know you and your family quite well. If your brother has been a good in-law and you have been a good person, you won't have to spend a lot of time building up your bona fides. That's,a big plus because guys who go courting at your age are, more often that not, suspected of already having an unofficial (or an official but hidden) family.

Your age might cause some initial awkwardness. But don't let that faze you. Age suggests maturity. (That's not always true, of course, but quite likely for someone your age than, say, someone who is only 18 like her). Such a maturity would enable you to handle better youthful fickleness and stubbornness. A stable job and financial independence often also come with age—factors that usually mean a lot to a girl's parents.

On the minus side, while at 40 you may already be quite sure about your feelings and thoughts, she, at 18, may still go through a lot of changes in heart and mind. Before you declare your intentions, you might want to think about how you would react if she says or acts like she doesn't love you anymore a few months or a year after your relationship begins.

If you're the jealous type, a sweetheart (or a wife) in her late teens or early 20s sets you up for a very stormy relationship. Young women her age are often single so if you two do get into a serious relationship, she might still attract suitors who might think it unlikely that she could already be seriously committed (or even already married). There is also the likelihood, depending on whether or not you look your age, that people would mistake you for her father or uncle. Don't get mad at them when that happens.

Starting and (hopefully) maintaining a relationship with your brother's sister-in-law will not be easy. However, even people of the same age and who start off almost complete strangers do not have things easy either.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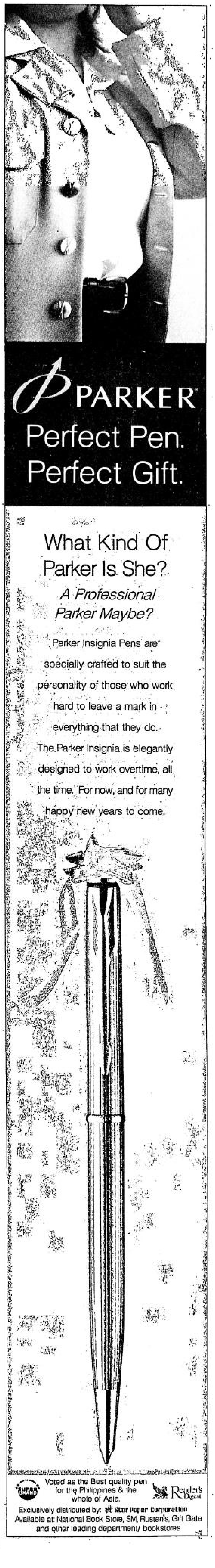
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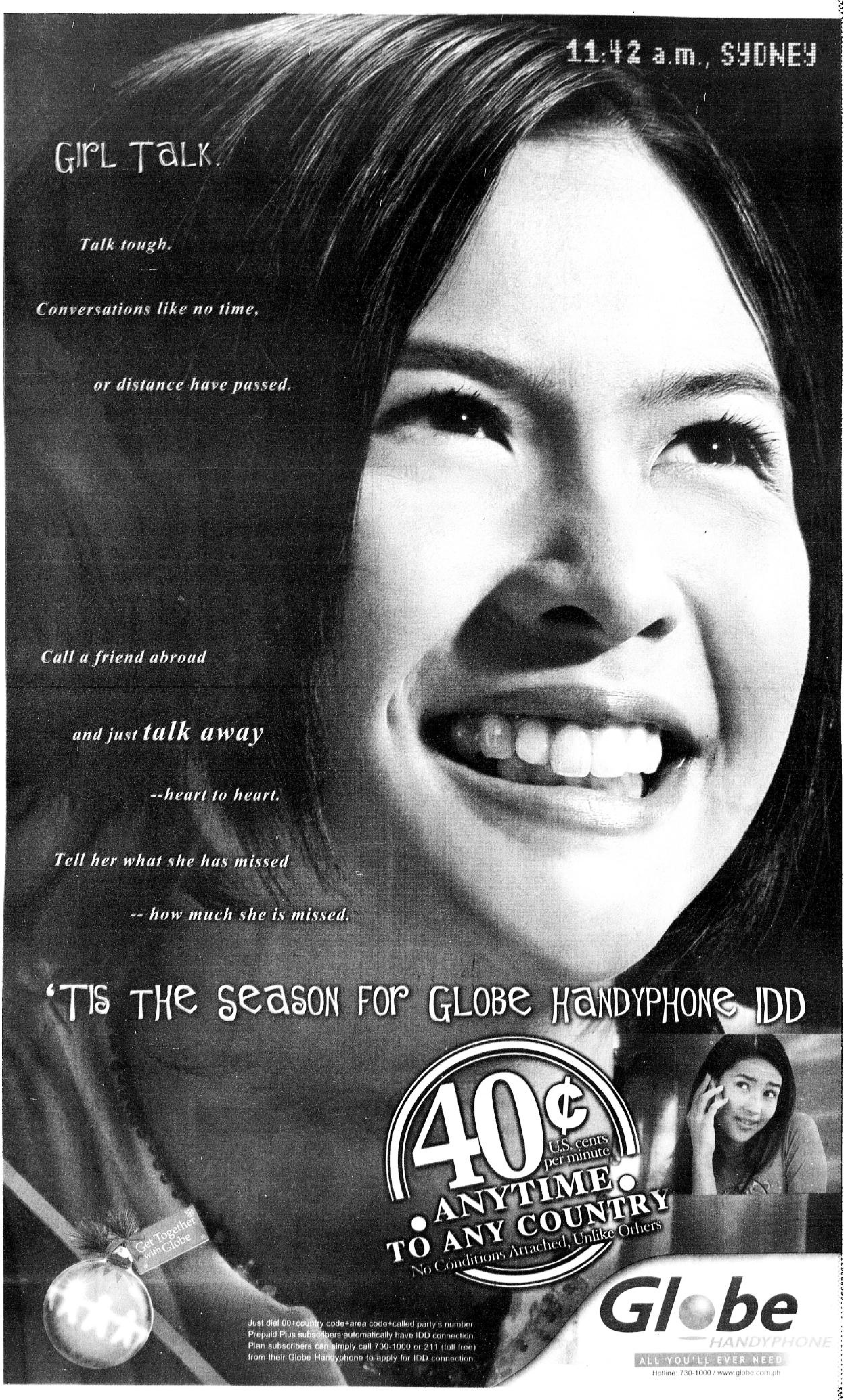

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LIFESTYLE

Keeping my Christmas wish list empty

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

WISH lists come with clockwork precision on Christmas. Except when we had to fill up more than 20 pages of Lifestyle (in my former life as this section's editor), I'm not in the habit of making one. But others are, and they enumerate the must-haves, from designer bags to luxury cosmetics to cell phone models. Whenever I come across such lists, I feel like telling these wishers that they must be confusing a wish list with a shopping list. The two are very different.

For a wish list, you look inward, into your core, or upward, to the heavens, to have it granted. For a shopping list, just go to the mall—with lots of money.

This Christmas I don't feel the urge to make a wish list that inevitably ticks off our gripes about our quality of life—from national governance to the C-5 trash, the hopeless traffic, the state of culture or fashion, and so on. Christmas is too precious a season, and too fleeting a moment in your life (now that you've seen more than 40 Christmases come and go) to be wasted on editorial issues. Year-end bitching about those things can come at any other time.

Spare Christmas. I don't make wishes anymore. Let me correct that—I don't wish for concrete things anymore. It's not that I feel old, or jaded, or cynical. It's just that I want to relish simplicity—feeling simple is the greatest luxury one can have.

This Christmas I want to keep my wish list empty. And I can keep it empty by taking stock of what I already have. I'm able enough to work hard and play hard, with a few evenings to spare for some red wine with **"Mrs. M."** I continue to have my strengths and, unfortunately, also my weaknesses. My children are doing well, giving me joys that are major and minor, giving me problems that, thank God, aren't major. My parents remain healthy and strong, my mom is especially strong enough to continue to try running my life. My job is keeping me useful and creative; our publishing business is doing well enough to give us pride and dignity in our profession. I'm back in my old home—as columnist, and, once in a while, miss being called "Sharon" (as in Stone) by **Joey's** "Tom" (as in Cruise). My staff remains unpredictably dynamic enough to test my sanity. My boss remains a genuine human being to all of us. I keep my friends, as they keep me. Each day brings problems and crises different from the previous days.

> It must be different from a shopping list. For the latter, you just go to the mall

Each day is a journey into discovering what, about life, I can change, and what I can't—and trying to build the humility to accept both. And then I sleep well at night.

I want to count what I have—not what I don't have. I want life to be that sort of exercise. I won't call it contentment; that's being presumptuous. Just call it acceptance. On Christmas, call it gratitude.

Christmas is when you can look at your glass and see that it's half-filled, instead of half-empty. After all, Christmas is, always, an answered prayer. So keep your wish list empty, to have a merry Christmas. Merry Christmas!

Discovery at De La Salle

LAST Saturday, I braved the South Expressway traffic. Better yet, I braved the company of two women—Bulletin's **Ethel Timbol** and **Bonjin Bolinao**—to make it to De La Salle, Dasmariñas, Cavite. It was worth it.

We attended the Pampango *merienda* **Joey Panlilio** hosted at the Museo De La Salle, a lifestyle museum he has been painstakingly and tastefully developing since 1996 on the vast De La Salle campus.

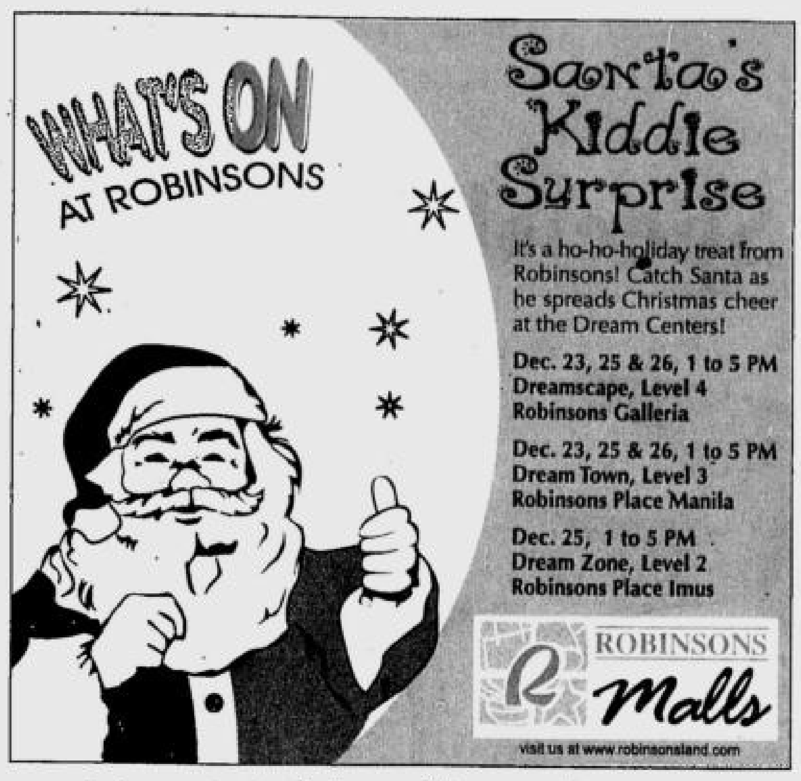
The museum is a re-creation of the two-story *bahay na bato* which you must see for it enlightens you and gives you pride in the *ilustrado* Filipino's 19th-century lifestyle. There's nothing like it today, in so far as the faithful attention to the minutest detail is concerned.

It's fun going around the house and feeling like a culture-voyeur looking into the grandiose nooks and crannies of the *ilustrado* home, redone in much grander scale, of course.

It's built of stone, brick and mortar, and the second story is wood—indigenous hard wood diligently sourced by Panlilio, much of it from ancestral homes, including the Panlilios'. The windows, doors, the fresco-ed or metal-cast ceilings and other architecture details replicate the designs from the late 19th century to the Philippine art nouveau and the early American Colonial periods.

The vast living room is awesome, with its clusters of period furniture. The recreation of the bedrooms is interesting. The museum, which overlooks a lake, is furnished with antique family heirlooms—furniture, decorative objects, fine and applied arts—donated or on loan from collectors, among them Joey's family (the Santos Joven-Panlilio family of Bacolor, Pampanga), Bro. **Andrew Gonzalez**, FSC, of the Amedo-Gonzalez fam-

KEEPING/ p.D4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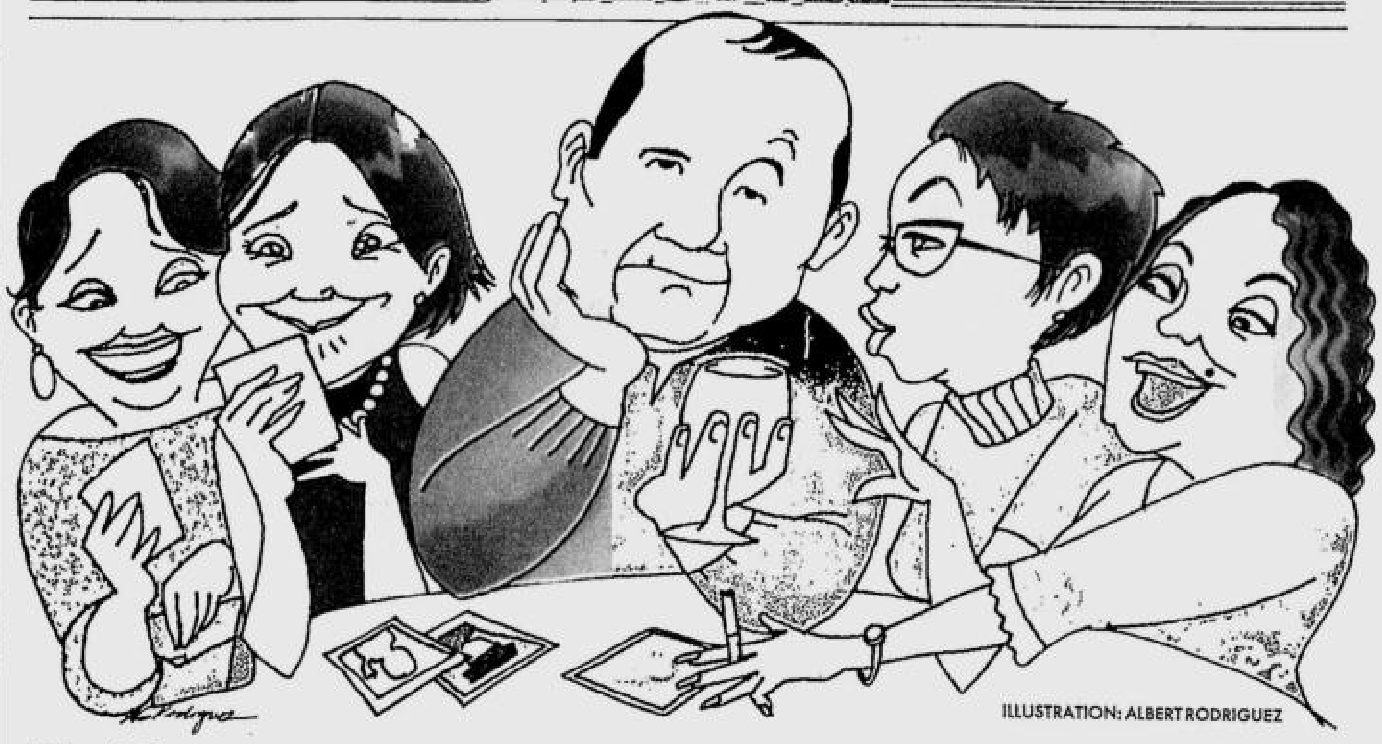


ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Menopause manor

By Jose Javier Reyes
Contributor

Here's a tête à tête with women on the verge of a biological breakdown

ONE thing nice about the holiday season is that it gives a chance or even an excuse for old friends to get together.

Blending with the infestation of Christmas lights in every imaginable convolution and in every available space, the holidays bring back those cherished people from long ago. They come home with their *balikbayan* boxes and the hunger for filling out the gaps brought by time and distance with all sorts of anecdotes and memories.

Over dinner, a group of college friends decided to defy pressing schedules involving family reunions, out-of-town trips and even breakneck adventures into the *tiangge* and Christmas bazaars between Tayuman and the Polo Club. The food and ambience became insignificant. The real main course was the chance to swap stories, assess each other's lives post-college and pre-Golden Age. The result was somewhat predictable yet delicious: we dug deep down our memory banks trying to revive the most embarrassing moments in our past. This included reviving to the utmost detail the more humiliating mistakes we committed when we were young, carefree and more marketable in the relationships department.

Teary-eyed

One thing is for sure. Mid- to late-40s is an interesting age: old friends have now turned into husbands-fathers and wives-mothers who tell stories about their children at the slightest provocation. Yes, it has become such a tedious cliché to point out how parents have a natural tendency to talk about their kids like their success in fertilization is actually a miracle that can be justly compared to the parting of the Red Sea.

Teary-eyed with cinematic smiles on their faces, my friends willingly yielded accounts of the cute growing-up years of their offspring, all those idiosyncratic moments historically captured in pictures kept in catalogued photo albums. Before you can stifle another insistent yawn or attempt to move to another topic, they'd excavate the innards of their bags and give you a complete audio-visual presentation of "The Evolution of Junior," complete with such mind-boggling annotation that would make a very good documentary for the Discovery Channel.

You hear the same stories over and over again. The events are more or less the same, only the parents (as narrators) and the children (the narrated) change. You keep that amused yet touching smile on your face while the teary eyes finally shed body fluids usually punctuated by an apocalyptic statement like, "We have grown old." You hear the same moans of delight as they elucidate on the meaning of life through their personal contribution to the continued existence of mankind.

Yet you still ask yourself (silently, of course) if indeed the world has changed that much by a mother's weepy account of how she discovered that her youngest son is now sprouting pubic hair. If only this boy knew or heard how his mother is updating the world with his hormonal development, then I am sure he would simply refuse to be heard or seen within the same continent as the captive audience.

Having no kids and incapable of procreation out of choice, the likes of me listened carefully and wondered whether I really had the short end of the deal or was actually privileged enough not to have had a first-hand experience of what my fertile friends were going through.

Well, I would never worry about my son turning schizophrenic because of his overload of "Ecstacy" or worry why he had enough condoms in his wallet to control the population growth of China. I need not spend sleepless nights wondering whether my teenage daughter is being molested willingly or unwillingly by some nincompoop she has fallen in love with or indulged in extra-special bonding. My God, I don't even have to worry about the rising costs of education, the price of a reasonable daily allowance or the importance of the latest cell phone to the social standing of a teener.

But my failure to be progenitor made me all so boring in the eyes of my friends now threatened to become premature grandparents. If I dared spoke about my activities that lead to non-reproductive results, I was quite certain that they would not even be polite enough to keep mum as I lashed out the lurid details. In other words, it was best that I remained boring.

Then, of course, it could not be helped that the conversation would veer to the advantages and disadvantages of reaching *our* age. Now that they had children who were as old as the time when we became friends, we could not help but compare our social stations, physical features and even clandestine histories of other peers who were not fortunate enough to be part of the reunion.

Absence does not necessarily make the heart grow fonder—it only makes the tongues wag faster.

Open secrets

We discussed someone we all knew who was carrying on an open-secret extramarital affair while assuming the role of a social zealot. Oh, the ladies began to act like girls again, emitting those repressed but not forgotten *kolehiyala* giggles. There was something particularly bitchy about the way comments flew across the table, lacerating the scarlet woman for being so hypocritical and dedicatedly horny.

"Well, at least," I said, "she is getting her jollies." And that was when the wife/mother personas began to surface with statements of protest. They reiterated the fact that they were not only condemning *her* for boinking another man, but how she presented herself so clean, intelligent and messianic. "It must be the guilt. That's her way of compensating for her sins," someone said. Weakness? Someone protested, saying that guts and not simply a hyperactive libido were required for any *kolehiyala* to take such risks. "*Kawawa naman* the children," another sighed. And what about the husband? It was a male in the group who said, "*OK lang*. He's happy because he has another woman. But can you blame him?" Someone who knew the husband (and had a terminal crush on him by our junior year) said, "She does not deserve like _______." Hmmm.

Derogatory remarks

That was when a chorus of "Aaaahhhs" seemed to put finality to the discussion. The texture of arguments changed completely yet not one of us justified that an extramarital affair on the part of the wife was the solution to the infidelity of the husband. "Why don't they just split up?" This raised another barrage of derogatory remarks directed against Madame Floozy. "*Kasi nga* it will be bad for her image." And this got everybody laughing. "Well, then she should stop behaving like she has a hotline to the Holy Spirit." More guffaws.

But why was it that when I asked, "Nobody really liked her, huh?" there were seven—count them—seven seconds of silence. It was from one of the group we least expected to elicit such a response that gave the most precise answer, "Because ever since then … she was dying to be liked and loved by everybody." That again, started an entire chorus of laughter and volumes of anecdotes about how the object of our amusement had always been as synthetic as Styrofoam.

I realized that after all these years, she had never been forgiven for all her inadequacies in the same manner that this pathetic creature had never forgiven herself for being who she really was, is and will be.

As the night stretched on, we were back to the same memory lane topics. But I could not help but compare and contrast the domicile character assumed by most of my old friends around me. Yes, times had changed us into protective drones and permutations of Mother Courage. And these nuances of character came about because we had become exactly the kind of people we used to poo-pooh when the music of The Fifth Dimension and Carole King dominated the airwaves. We had become our parents.

We claimed to be different—to be more open-minded but we were still judgmental and, in so many ways, conventional. The males had cut their shoulder-length hair or stopped using the blow dryer to perfect the pouf. The women had given up their cans of hairspray to achieve a stone-like consistency on their Flip-hairstyle. We now laughed at our Elephant and palazzo pants, our Nik-Nik shirts and Bang-Bang jeans—yet we still squealed like pimple-infested juveniles each time we heard Barry White's "Love's Theme," Van McCoy's and Voyage's "Souvenirs."

We let the evening pass—with bottles of beer, cups of coffee and stories from long ago re-interpreted by the same cast of characters but with an entirely different perspective. We were just about ready to be ushered into Menopause Manor.

SM image models named

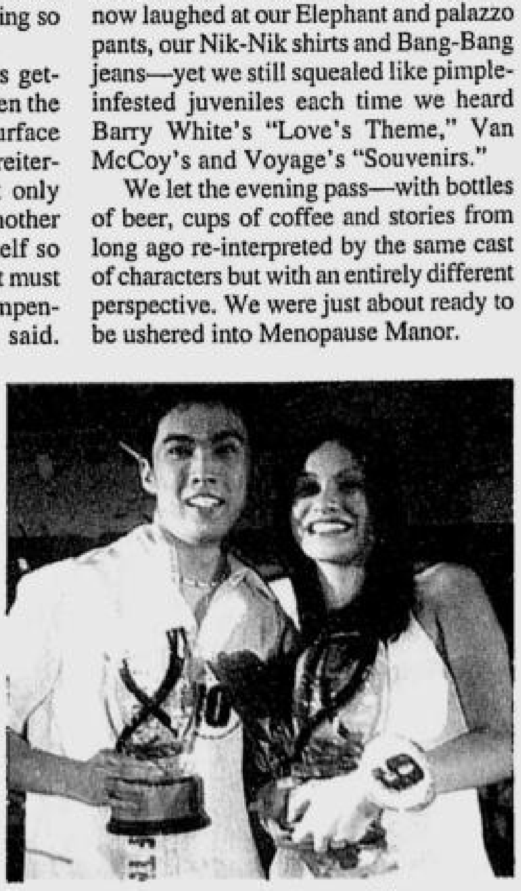
ALBERT Ryan Guinto and Joyce Tiffany San Antonio were named the grand prizewinners in the recently concluded SM Star Models Image Model Quest 2001 held at the SM Megamall.

They bested finalists both from the Philippines and different parts of the world in this joint project of the SM Supermalls and Viva. Some of this year's finalists came from Italy, Norway, Germany, Canada and the US.

Guinto, a political science senior at the De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, dreams of becoming a top model. Winning the SM Star Model search brings this 5'9" hunk closer to his goal. Guinto also bagged the Mr. Great Body Award and the Best Male in Buffalo Jeans wear during the competition.

San Antonio, a 5'7" Canadian-Filipino from Toronto, was the first runner-up in Canada's 2001 Image Model Quest. She is a consistent honor student at the Dennis O'Connor School in Toronto, and sings and bowls professionally.

Guinto and San Antonio each brought home the grand cash prize of P25,000 and other special prizes.


WINNERS Albert Ryan Guinto and Joyce Tiffany San Antonio

Teen Lit Camp now accepts applicants

TEEN Lit Camp, a weeklong out-of-town camp for 13-16 year-olds who wish to learn more about literature and creative writing, is now accepting participants to its Summer 2002 session. This year's camp is set on April 15-19, 2002, at the Philippine High School for the Arts in Mt. Makiling, Los Baños, Laguna.

There are 20 available slots for Teen Lit Camp. Applicants need not be enrolled in a school. They must submit three samples of their literary works, in any of the following genres: poetry, essay and fiction.

GOINGS-ON

All submissions should be typewritten, accompanied by a short bio-data, enclosed in a short brown envelope, and submitted to: Teen Lit Camp, Adarna House, 73-A Scout Limbaga St., QC. Deadline for submission is on Jan. 25, 2002.

ART CONTEST. Young artists are called to join in KFC and Mister Donut's on-the-spot Christmas Card Making and Design a Donut Christmas Box contests to be held Dec. 22 at the main atrium of the Festival Mall. Open to all kids 7-12 years old, the competition will have the theme "Celebrating Christmas with KFC/ Mister Donut."

To join, purchase a Chuckie meal at any KFC participating store in the Metro South area. One will be given a registration form to be filled out and submitted to any of the KFC branches in Alabang, Festival Mall, BF Homes, SM Southmall, Better Living, Shell SLT, Pavilion Mall and Pacita.

Buy any Mister Donut doughnut from: Alabang Junction, Alabang Market, Montillano, BF Resort, Canaynay, San Antonio Valley, Vimart, Zapote, South Supermarket Alabang, Pacita Foodmart, Four Kings Sucat, San Pedro Proper, Lianas Alabang, San Pedro 1 and Muntinlupa Poblacion. You can obtain a registration form that will give your kids the chance to design the Mister Donut Christmas box.

For each contest, the first place winner will be awarded P10,000 worth of KFC Smarty Party and a KFC/Mister Donut gift pack; while the second and third outstanding artists will be given P7,000 and P5,000 worth of KFC Smarty Party, respectively, plus a KFC/Mister Donut gift pack.

CONTEST WINNER. Edgar Samar, a psychology student at the Ateneo de Manila University, bagged the 2002 PBBY Salanga Prize.

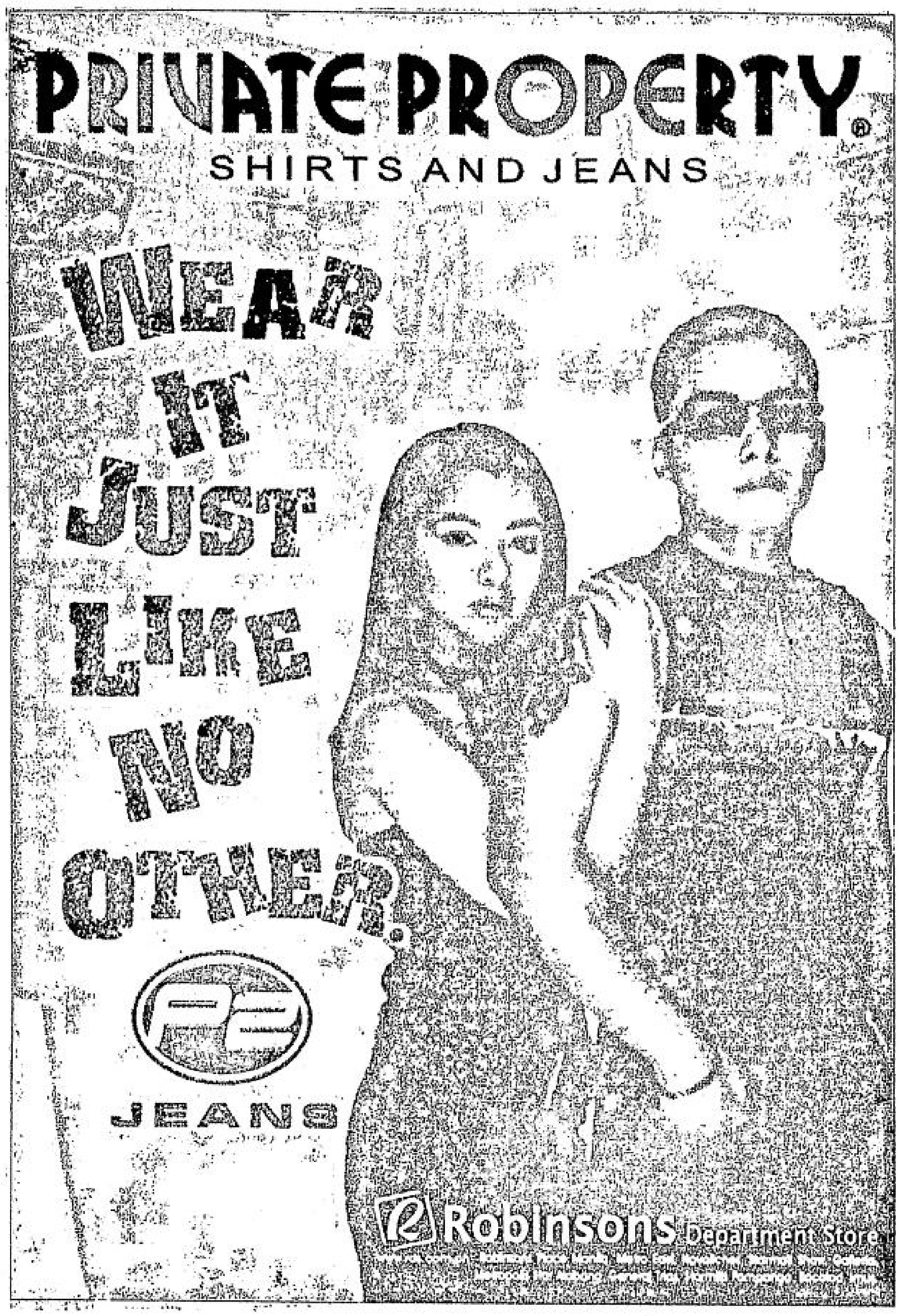
Samar's works have been published in Heights, Tomas, Musa and JUNIOR INQUIRER MAGAZINE. His award-winning story, "Uuwi na ang Nanay kong si Darna!" snatched for him a gold medal, courtesy of the National Library, plus P25,000 in cash from the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Samar will receive the prizes in formal ceremonies during the National Children's Book Day celebration on July 16, 2002 at the CCP.

The nationwide contest was open to all professional and aspiring writers in English or Filipino, sponsored by the Philippine Board on Books for Young People. Non-winning entries may be claimed at the PBBY Secretariat, 73-A Scout Limbaga St., Brgy. Laging Handa, QC. Call 372-3548/3549 or fax 372-4204.

SINGING COMPETITION. Calling all Filipino male and female singers, below 35 and 33 years old, respectively. You are invited to participate in the First Shen Xiang International Singing Competition 2002 May 10-20, 2002, in Beijing, China. Detailed information and photocopies of the brochure are available for free at the Music Division of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Call 832-2314/1125 local 1605.

Send applications to: The First Shen Xiang International Singing Competition, Room 313 An Yuan Building 23 Heping Xijie, Beijing, People's Republic of China or e-mail professorshenxiang @163. net.yhl@public. gb.com.cm. Entries must be sent by Jan. 31, 2002.

SPECIAL TREAT. Until Dec. 31, order any Magoo's product online at www.magoos.com and receive a coupon for free 15- minute Internet access at any Universe Cybercafe outlet.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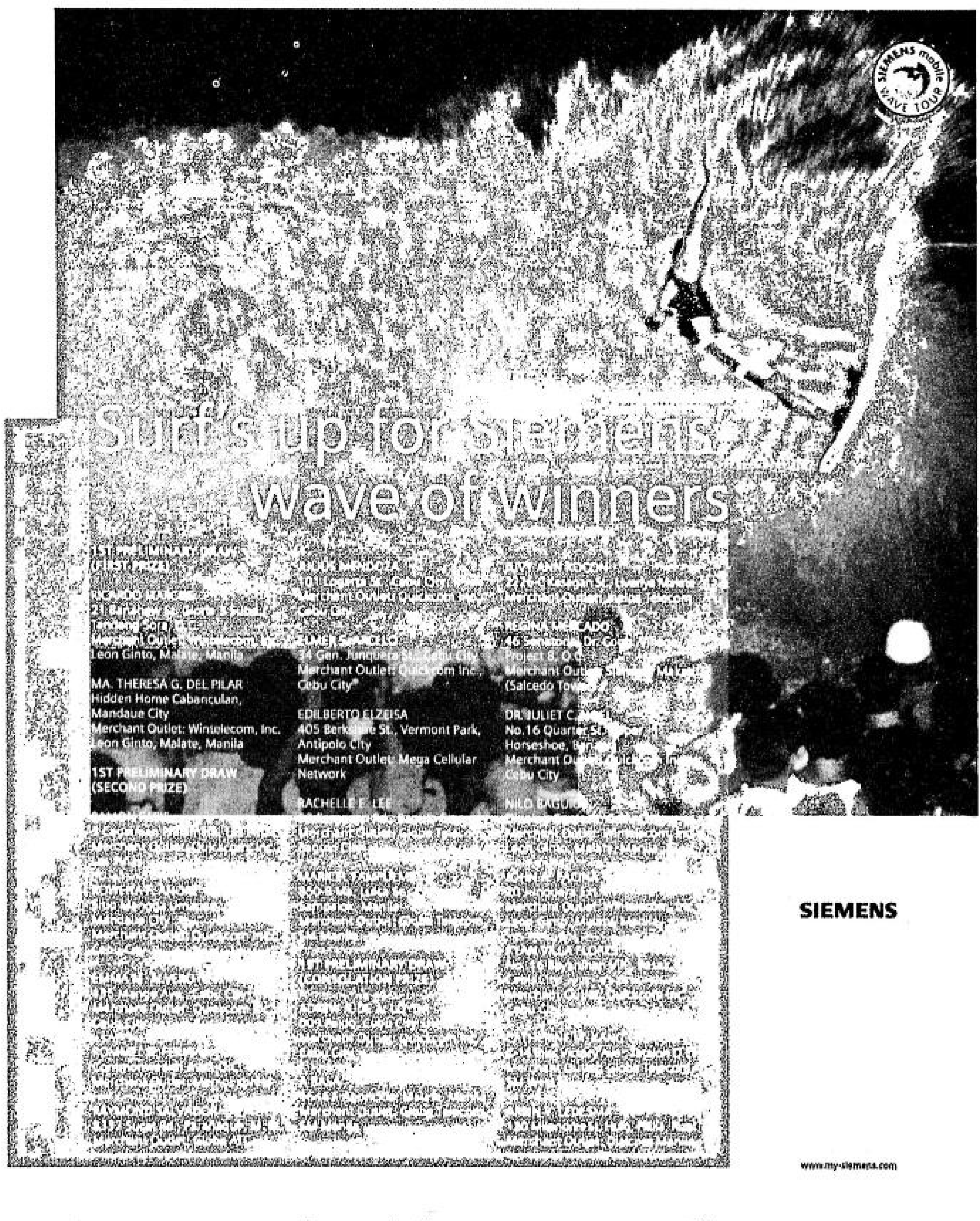
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Keeping my Christmas wish list empty

(From page D1)

ily of Sulipan, Apalit, Pampanga, **Marie Theresa Lammoglia-Viratà**, Dr. **Paulo Campos** and NCCA chair **Jaime C. Laya**. For instance, it was curious to see the finely crafted wood crib of Laya's children in one of the bedrooms.

The sections of the house—the *caida*, *sala mayor*, *despacho*, *cuarto*, *oratorio*, *comedor* and *cocina*—bear design details based on extensive research.

It has a beautiful *azotea*, which gives a breathtaking view of the garden. Panlilio developed this lush garden of turn-of-the-century plants, such as *champaca*, *cadena de amor*, *sampaguita*, *dama de noche*. Panlilio's mom, the former **Lourdes Yaptinchay-Abad**, picked *ilang-ilang* and gave the blooms to guests at *merienda*. It was in the *azotea* that we had *merienda* at sundown—a most serene view and hour. Brother Gonzalez's nephew, **Gene Gonzalez** and his Café Ysabel prepared Pampango specialties. Gene wasn't there but his son, **Gino**, a new chef, was.

The living museum was the idea of Brother Gonzalez and his nephew Joey Panlilio, a De La Salle graduate. The family and the school raised funds for it.

That Saturday was the opening of "Baro't Saya" exhibit on the ground floor of the museum. It's a carefully chosen collection of *baro't saya* and *ternos* preceding even **Ramon Valera**'s time. The pieces are from private collections. Among them are **Luz Sarmiento Padilla**'s *panuelo*-less *terno* of light green lace designed by **Victoria Galang** of Madonna Fashion; the wedding gown of **Tita Yaptinchay LaO** designed by **Pura Escurdia**, a white silk crêpe, tiered lace with silk flounces; a black mourning *terno* with veil made of *rengue* (a sheer handwoven fabric made from *piña*) from the 1920s, from the collection of **Patis Tesoro**; the wedding gown of Doña **Teresa Crisologo de Quema**, a *baro* with *panuelo* made of fine *canamazo*, with hand-embroidered floral motifs in art nouveau, and full skirt of ivory satin; a *sinamay* striped flesh *camisa*, short embroidered *piña pano* from the 1890s, matched with black and white plaid cotton skirt also from the 1890s, from the collection of Ambassador **Rafaelita Hilario-Soriano** and **Ramon N. Villegas**.

THE MUSEO De La Salle (*sala mayor*)

The *merienda* was also a welcome for **Cora Alvina**, who's taking up the challenge at National Museum; and **Ino Manalo**, who succeeds Cora at Metropolitan Museum. Culturati friends were around—**Salvador Bernal**, **Tony** and **Mita Rufino**, **Malu Unson**, **Ramon Zaragoza**, **Toto Gonzalez**, **Nanette Teves**, **Eric Pineda**, Cora's aunt **Teresa Alvina**, Patis Tesoro who's busy preparing her daughter's wedding.

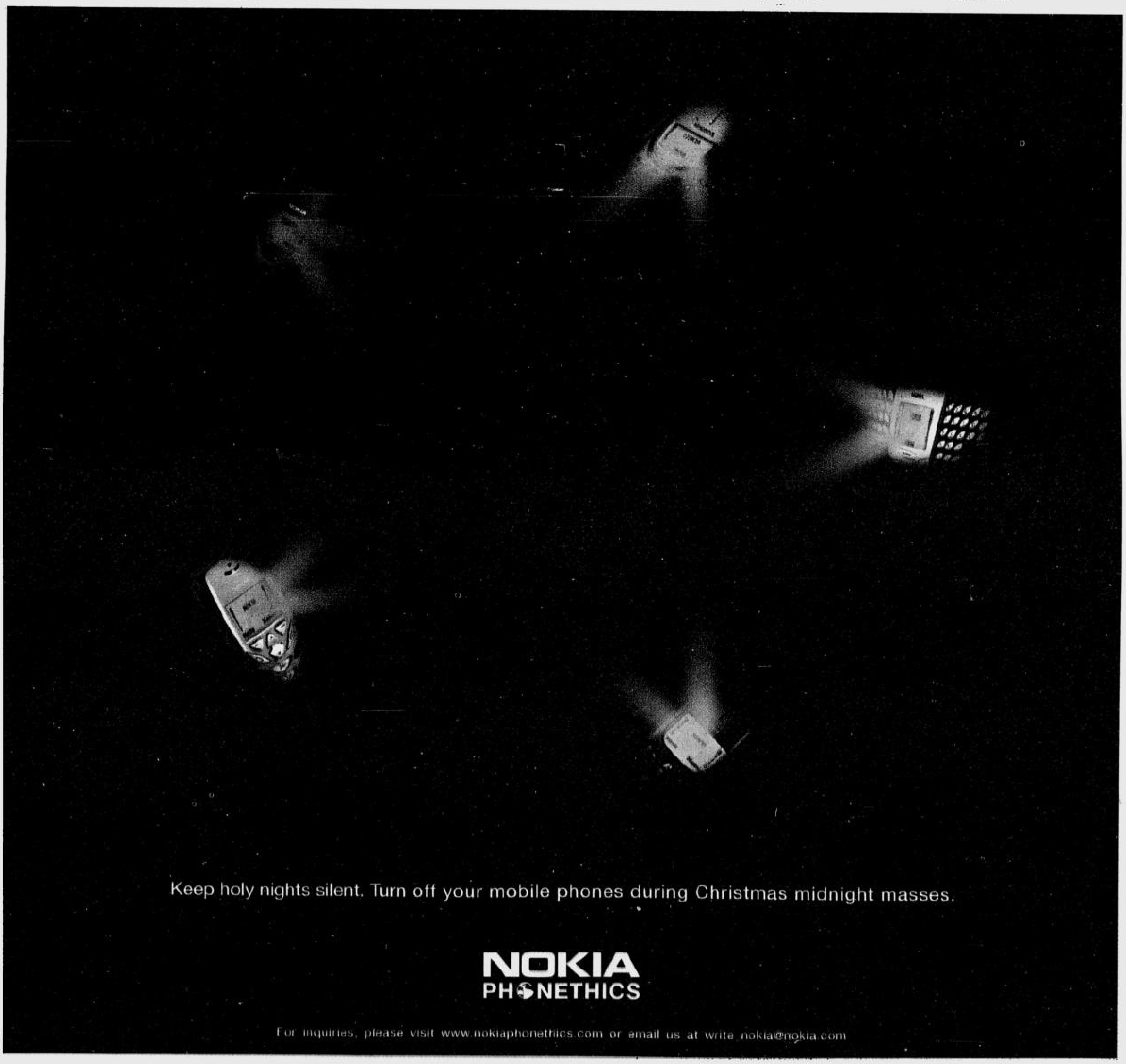
The long holidays should be a good time to check out the Museo De La Salle. It's open from Tuesdays to Saturdays, with very minimal entrance fees.

Claude's 'longganisa' for 'noche buena'

NEXT week grab the chance to also check-out **Claude Tayag**'s latest wood-sculpture at the Lopez Museum at Rockwell. We ran into Claude at the launch of the Best of Food Magazine cookbook at 9501. Claude continues his wood sculpture and wood home pieces. But for Noche Buena, Claude has something else. He's making special *longganisas*—chicken *adobo*, chicken *inasal* (an aromatic barbecue flavor from Negros with lemongrass and *calamansi*), pork *adobo*, pork XXXO (a super hot *longganisa* spiked with smoked-dried chilis), beef *salpicao*, *bistek baka*.

These *longganisas* are preservative-free and prepared in Claude's kitchen in Pampanga. His meat products and bottled sauces are sold at Rustan's supermarkets and Bon Appetit.

E-mail the author at tsanjuan@skyinet.net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THE TRIBAL look goes with this casual blouse by Freeway.

Makeup's big M.A.C.

By Marge C. Enriquez
Photos by Chito Vecina
VISUAL CONCEPT BY ALBERT AVELLANA

MOST women take makeup seriously, if they wear it at all.

"It's a lady's best friend. It's all about colors and having fun with them," said Celestine Sng, (pronounced sung), the Singaporean expert from the M.A.C. Pro Team. Makeup Art Cosmetics was developed for the professional makeup artist to use for shows, stage, film, television and photography. Supermodel Linda Evangelista swears by the Spice Lip Pencil, which suits anybody. Madonna favors Russian Red Lipstick and Penelope Cruz loves the Taupe eye shadow.

Sng visited Manila recently for the Floating World Tour, a traveling show that launches Viva Glam III lipstick. This is the third in a series of lipsticks whose proceeds are donated to the M.A.C.'s AIDS Funds. Transvestite Ru Paul promoted Viva Glam I. which had a deep brownish red shade. M.A.C. later went to the other extreme by getting butch singer k.d. lang to be the image model for Viva Glam II, a muted pink shade that was closer to the skin tone. Viva Glam III, in contrast, has a brownish plum shade that matches any color of the dress.

Sng says there are unlimited ways to wear Viva Glam III and create various textures and looks. It can be worn with a Raisin Lip Pencil for a defined mouth; or worn with Crystal Beach or with Nico Lip Glass to exude sensuality; or mixed with clear Lip Glass for a sheer and natural texture. It can also be mixed with Viva Glam II for a muted, mauve shade. And if you want a three-dimensional effect, you can use Fluff or Fondle Lipstick on the whole lip and dab Viva Glam II on the middle part of the lips.

Trends for 2002

For the Inquirer pictorial, Sng played with the tribal theme on Ida Campo's face to show M.A.C.'s diversity of products. The look was punctuated with Viva Glam III, naturally. The tribal makeup is an extension of the body makeup, which is the rage in fashion capitals.

Designs can range from tribal to gothic to rap, rock and even simple lettering stencils to make a body tattoo. M.A.C. has transfer tattoos that last for two weeks even with showering.

"The other option is to get creative and draw a motif with a free hand or you can always trace a design you like onto the body part, do the outline with M.A.C.'s Boot Black eye liner and fill up with different shades and textures using M.A.C.'s Pigments, Glitter, Paints, Cream, Colour Base, etc.," said Sng.

The look complements the tribal and punk fashion of 2001. With the advent of Modern Romance, makeup will go back in time, said Sng.

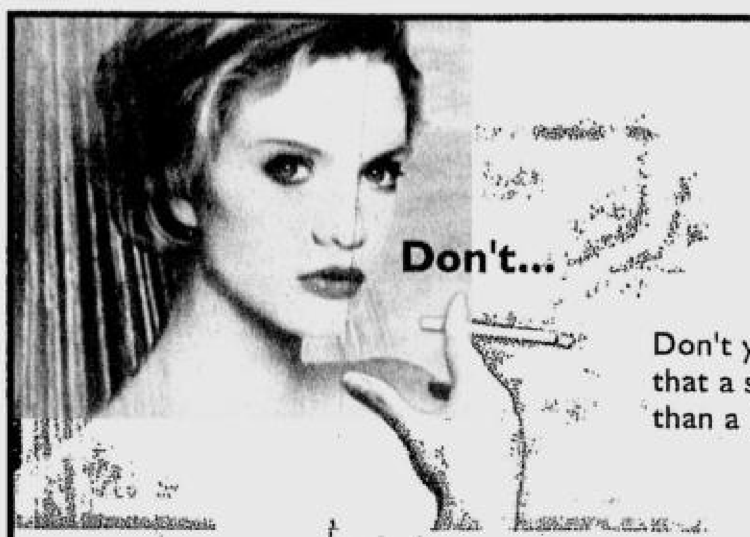
"M.A.C. will launch Perverted Pearl in January. This collection is all about exploring the hidden beauty of the pearl, from its clarity to shade variations to texture. It's a tribute to the grandeur and glamour during the eras of Queen Elizabeth, the Maharajahs of India and Coco Chanel who popularized this exotic jewel. Pearls were also significant in determining a person's wealth and status. In the '60s, Audrey Hepburn, Grace Kelly, Jackie O were hardly seen without them. The look is subdued, fresh, pretty and soft. There will be a lot of frost and shimmery textured eye shadows, lipsticks, nail polish—a reflection of the pearl, its shell, the sea. Shades of muted pinks, grays, shell, pearl, lilac, silver and taupe will enhance one's features in the prettiest ways," explained Snag.

For the more adventurous, the Peacenik look will be launched in March. Baby boomers will have a heyday recalling the era of the hippie chic, the Hare Krishna movement and the sounds of The Beatles, Bob Dylan and Jimmy Hendrix.

"Makeup was fairly neutral—lots of skin tone shades, peach, terra cotta, pale yellow, green, browns, mauves, taupe in satin, velvet and max textures. The overall look was healthy, glowing and happy and non-fuss," said Sng.

With India's influence, the *bindi*, the dot on the forehead, can be created with M.A.C.'s glitters, Pigment and Paint.

MAKEUP'S/p.E4



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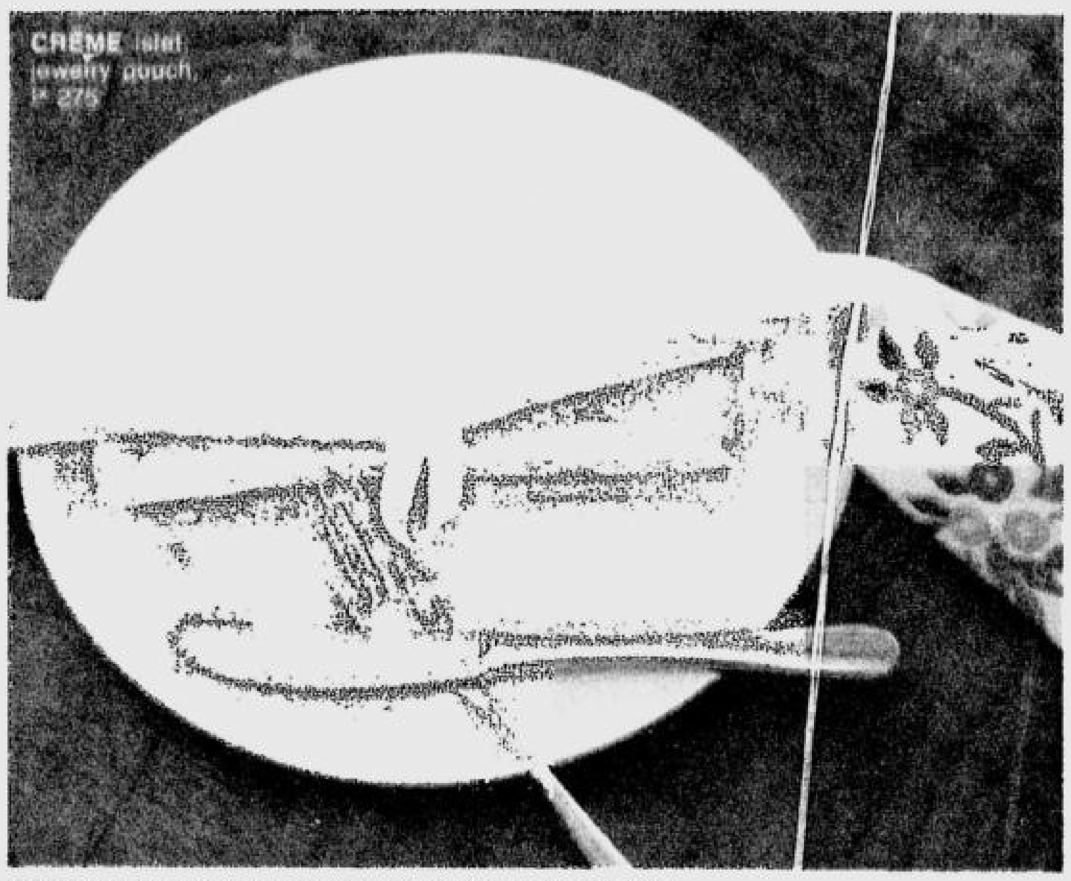
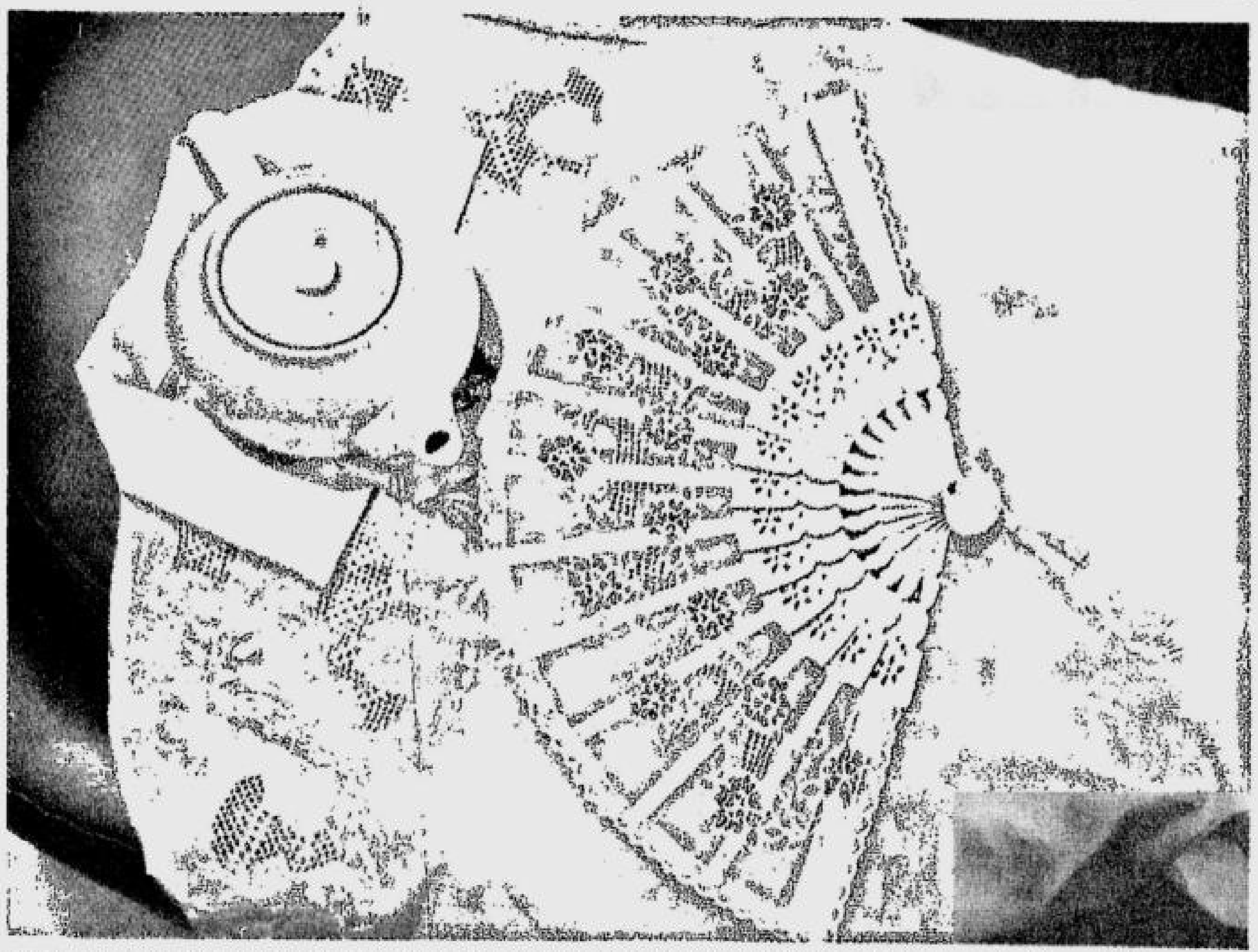


WHITE guest towel with floral embroidery, P165 set of 2



BABY pink linen embroidered women's blouse, P1,100; ladies' fan in white with floral embroidery, P350

The new flowering of florals

By Camille T. Cruz
Contributor
Photos by Chito Vecina
VISUAL CONCEPT: ALBERT AVELLANA

THE PATRIOTIC mood in America as a result of Sept. 11 has made the stars and stripes ubiquitous, particularly in fashion. The patriotic wave is such that it is also influencing other countries to reinvent their own national colors. In the Philippines, the fervor has translated to ethnicity with a twist. The look is really floral with a native dash. It can appear in little pieces of napkins and tablecloth with floral embroidery or stencil detailing. There are also ladies' shirts in baby pink with embroidered details. Also step-in espadrilles of natural fabric like *abaca* in pastel linear patterns.

Not to be ignored are florals that are part of the Mexican-inspired theme that you can find on napkins from a long time ago. As many of these florals will be seen on various items aside from napkins and runners. Think embroidery, islet prints, a little lace with a bit of ruffles.

There is a flowing flowery theme in many lightweight clothing and accessories. When we start bringing out those floral pieces, let them remind us of something we owned or saw before. We might even wear them on pieces such as bikinis and simple white cotton peasant top. You have probably seen them somewhere on nightgowns or blouses.

E-mail the author at camille.cruz@hotmail.com

All items from Tesoro's, 1016 Arnaiz Ave., (formerly Pasay Road), Makati City. Tel. No. 844-4253

wish: wear
wish for wisdom
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NATURAL-COLORED step-in type espadrilles, P325

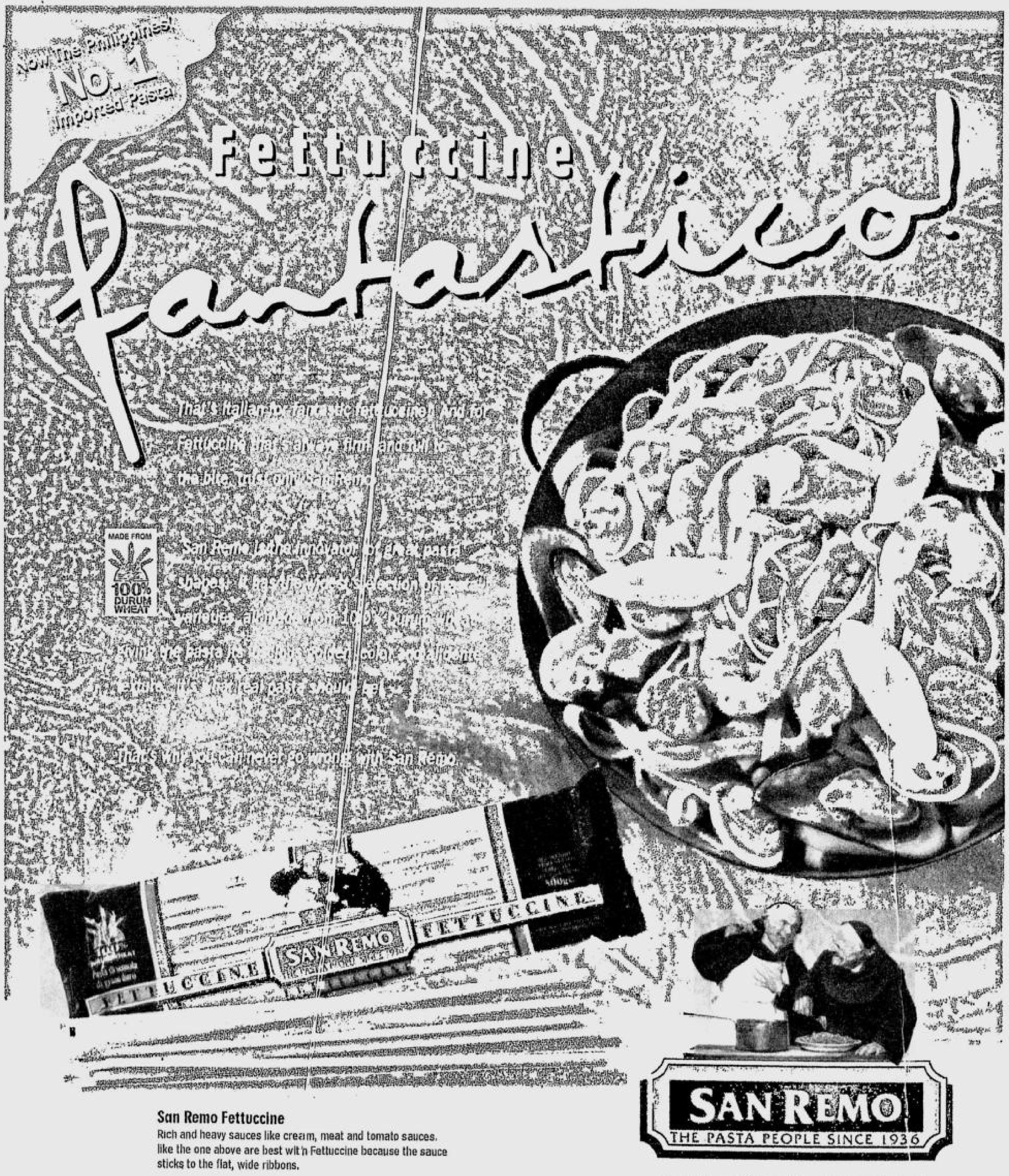
Top social hostesses featured

THE PHILIPPINE Tatler marks its first Christmas with a lineup of social buzz for its December issue.

Since it is the season for throwing parties, learn a trick or two from the country's Top 20 Social Hostesses, according to the list of social arbiter, Maurice Arcache, and find out how these women redefine hospitality. Prominent social figures relive the Christmas of their lives in a candid and revealing feature on their choicest Christmas celebrations.

As for the latest on the grapevine, Lucy Broadbent gives an in-depth look at Jackie Collins' juicy and scandalous exposé on Hollywood couples, plus get the real score on the alleged extinction of the precious blue sapphire.

Philippine Tatler's December issue likewise unveils what's in for diners at the posh Prince Albert this holiday season, while interior design specialists will rave in awe at a Mediterranean-inspired home designed by Ivy and Cynthia Almario.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San Remo Fettuccine
Rich and heavy sauces like cream, meat and tomato sauces. like the one above are best with Fettuccine because the sauce sticks to the flat, wide ribbons.

SAN REMO
THE PASTA PEOPLE SINCE 1936

It's Time You Had Real Pasta

Featured Recipe: PAELLA PASTA

INGREDIENTS
500g San Remo Fettuccine
250g clams
300g medium-sized shrimp
250g mussels
1/2 kilo chicken, cut into serving pieces
1/4 kilo pork, cut into serving pieces
150g ham, cut into 1/2-inch squares
1 pc. chorizo de bilbao, sliced
2 tbsp. olive oil
4 cloves garlic, crushed
1 onion, finely chopped
1 cup tomato sauce
1 pc. red bell pepper, cut into strips
2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup peas
2 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
1 tsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. dried basil

PROCEDURE:
1. Cook Fettuccine according to package directions. Set aside.
2. Boil clams and set aside 1 cup broth.
3. Boil mussels separately.
4. Heat oil in a pan. Fry chicken, pork, ham and chorizo. Cover until half done. Set aside.
5. Saute garlic, onion, tomato sauce and shrimp.
6. Add clam broth and fried meats. Simmer until pork and chicken are tender.
7. Add red bell pepper, peas and clams.
8. Season with salt, sugar and basil. Simmer for 6-7 miuntes.
9. Serve over cooked fettuccine. Garnish with eggs.

For more exciting and appetizing recipes log on to www.san-remo.com.au or e-mail us at sysumktg@info.com.ph

Parsley moves out of the kitchen

FRENCH skincare and cosmetic giant Clarins discovered recently a new use for parsley outside the kitchen.

Parsley has become an important ingredient in Clarins' newly improved Whitening Treatment range after it was found that the leafy vegetable contained ingredients with exceptional lightening benefits.

Combined with French grape extract, dark algae, camomile and Vitamin C, among others, parsley gives women light, even skin tone and young supple skin. The new product also improves other skin conditions, nourishes the skin and keeps it healthy and radiant.

Clarins' Whitening Treatment Range includes a whitening lotion for all skin types, an alcohol-free lotion enriched with Vitamin B5. The oil-free whitening moisture lotion, with SPF 20 to protect the skin from the sun and pollution, ensures clear, luminous complexion while keeping the skin hydrated throughout the day.

An ideal complement to these products is the Whitening Eye Contour Serum that banishes dark circles in the eye contour.

Clarins also has the Intensive Whitening Essence, a highly concentrated oil-free serum that minimizes dark spots and prevents new ones from forming. The Whitening Mask promotes milky-white complexion in just five minutes.

For the body, Clarins offers the Lightening Body Lotion that create an antilight protective film on the skin's surface, preventing the appearance of new unsightly marks and regulating melanin production to stop the growth of existing marks.

Clarins' Whitening Treatment range is available only at Rustan's.

Product helps keep skin youthful

ELIZABETH Arden cosmetics has launched By Lines, a brand-new serum with a specially developed formula to keep a woman's skin youthful and glowing well into her 40s.

By Lines is a result of advanced research on how natural substances can stimulate the skin and keep it glowing. It strengthens the skin, through different natural oils, in its fight against aging. The product contains fatty acids from borage seed oil that strengthen the skin's natural protective barrier and increase moisture levels. Skin becomes strong and resistant to the pressure of pollution and weather conditions. Coriander seed oil maintains the skin's softness and smooth texture.

Phytosphingosine keeps the skin moisturized and assists in the natural exfoliation process. A Vitamin A derivative, a patented molecule developed by Elizabeth Arden research, acts on cell renewal to smooth out wrinkles and fine lines to keep the skin smooth and young.

Available in a 30 ml pump bottle. By Lines is applied before putting on the moisturizer. It takes only two or three drops to treat the whole face. There is no need to massage, leave on the skin or rub in for hours as the serum instantly melts into the skin. With continued use, one can feel one's skin improving, becoming more supple, healthy and youthful-looking. Elizabeth Arden cosmetics are available at Rustan's.

New product for no-fuss hair care

TONI Leviste, equestrienne nonpareil and epitome of natural beauty, has been chosen spokesperson for the soon-to-be-launched Clinique's Simple Hair Care System.

The highest-ranked Asian rider according to International BCM World Rankings and only the second and youngest Southeast Asian rider to qualify and participate in the Olympic Games, the petite 28-year-old has a beauty regimen distinguished by its stark simplicity. The philosophy works well for her sporting lifestyle and discriminating taste.

The new hair-care line from Clinique, a reputable name in the skin-care field for almost four decades now, affirms its commitment to simplicity, service and tangible results.

Exclusively available at Rustan's, Clinique's Simple Hair Care System consists of three shampoos, three conditioners, four goal-specific styling products and six brushes to respond to every woman's stringent demands for optimal beauty, health and manageability.

Leviste has long relied on Clinique for her daily beauty regimen. "I've long been using Clinique's Compact Powder because it's very light and gentle on the skin. It's one of those few compact powders that absorb the oil right away," she says. Clinique, she adds, has always been synonymous with quality.

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OR it can suit this Oscar de la Renta gown, which matches the shade of Viva Glam III

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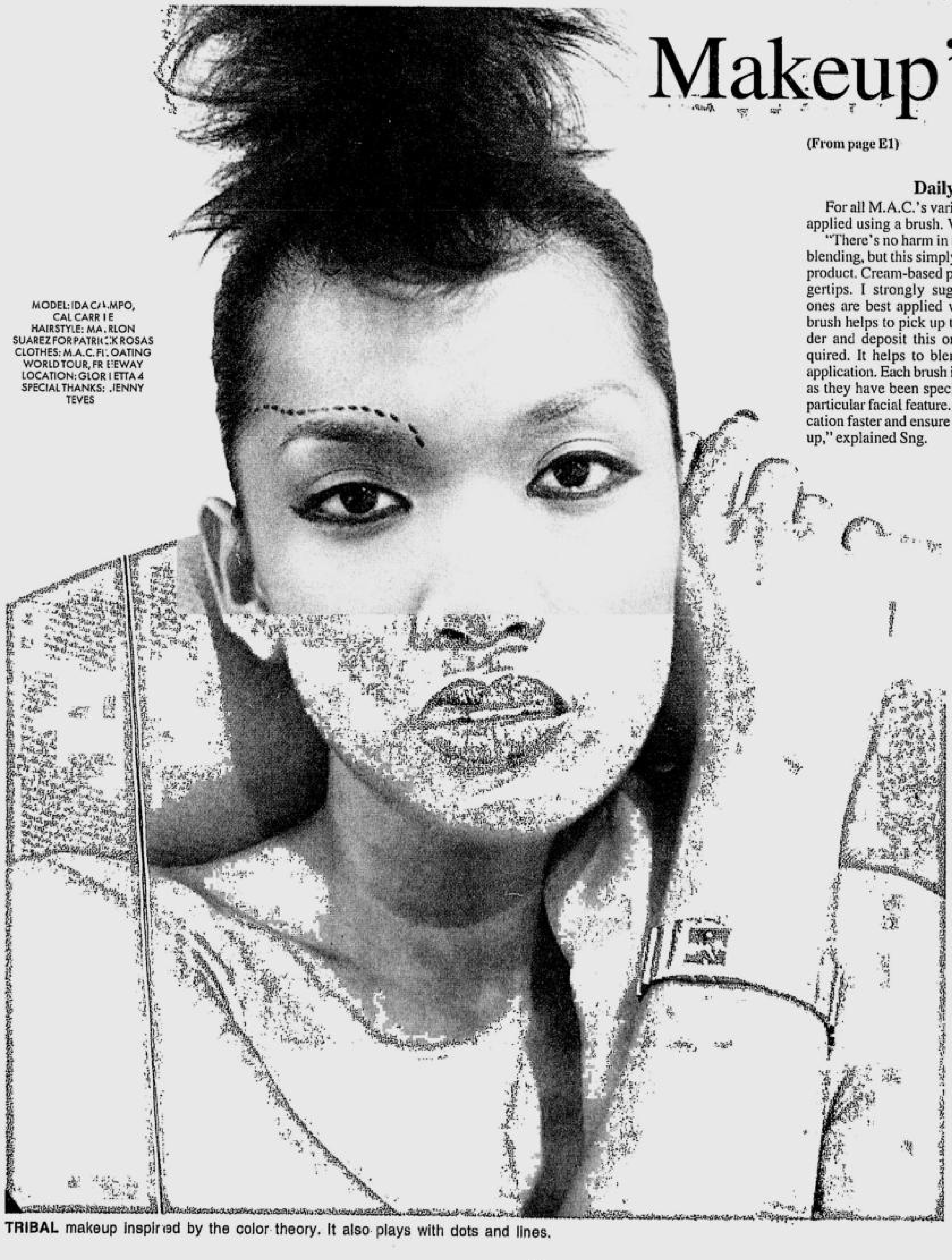

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TRIBAL makeup inspired by the color theory. It also plays with dots and lines.

Makeup's big M.A.C.

(From page E1)

Daily wear

For all M.A.C.'s variety, the products are best applied using a brush. What if you aren't a pro?

"There's no harm in using one's fingertips for blending, but this simply does not work for every product. Cream-based products are best with fingertips. I strongly suggest that the powdered ones are best applied with makeup brushes. A brush helps to pick up the right amount of powder and deposit this onto the specific area required. It helps to blend and ensure a smooth application. Each brush is different from the other, as they have been specifically designed for that particular facial feature. Brushes also make application faster and ensure good, long-lasting makeup," explained Sng.

Makeup isn't something a woman can't do on the go, especially in the car. "The only way to do this is when the car is stationary and most women apply products like two-way cake, eyeliner and lipstick. Personally I don't make this a habit. I find it stressful having to apply makeup at the same time having to watch the traffic light so I don't get honked at. Even in the passenger seat, it's mind-boggling as there is no stability at all. Every woman should set aside at least five to 10 minutes in the morning for her makeup routine. After all, makeup is part of being a woman, and it's a little time investment especially if you know it's going to make you look and feel better," she said.

One of the problems of women's is the puffy face after a night of drinking or just before her period. Sng is not too keen on shading the cheeks, as it looks dated.

"My solution is to focus on other assets of the face—the eyes, lips or skin. The trick is to draw attention away from your flaw."

With the likes of Linda Evangelista, Madonna and Penelope Cruz swearing by it, Makeup Art Cosmetics can lend movie-star gloss to your humdrum looks

MAKEOVER. Makeup-shy Mae Romero was about to get married when she came for the shoot. Unlike many makeup artists, who favor the thick matte makeup, Celestine Sng suggested a bridal makeup that was subdued to show off her glowing skin. Sng used blue violet, frosted white for highlight and a pastel blue for the eyes and taupe gray for contour. She also recommended the look of flushed cheeks and a soft lip color.

MODELS wearing Lee creations

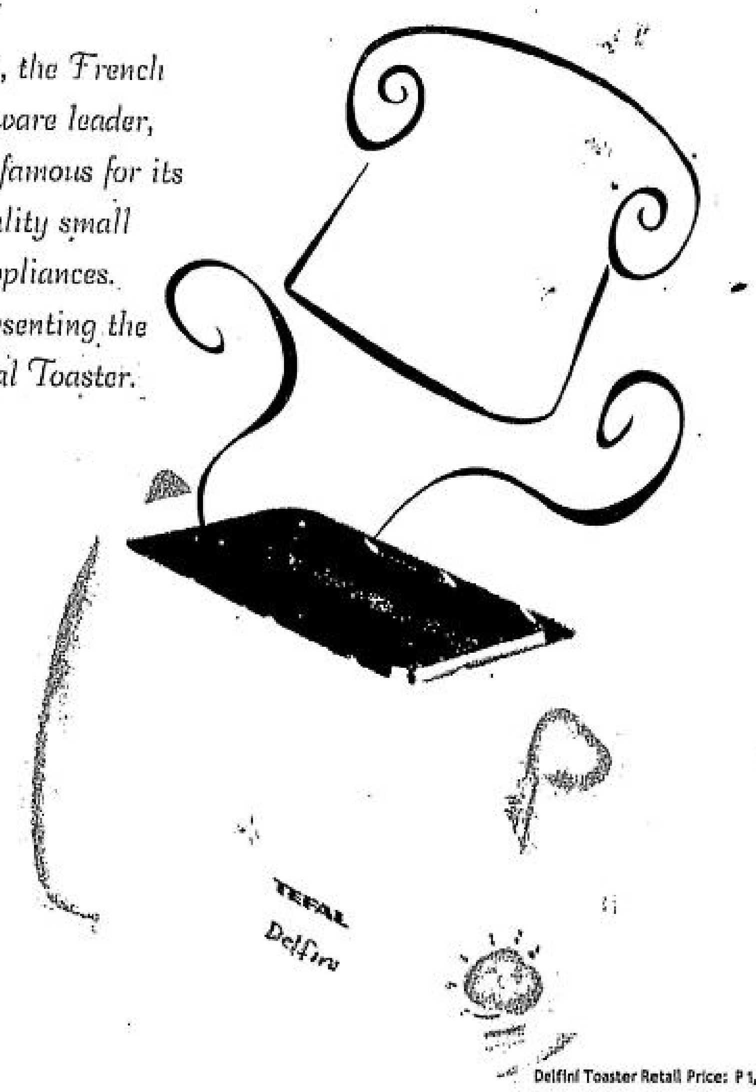
Street clothes that rock

LEE USA brings forward the grit and self-styled dissidence of the young, expressed most eloquently by rock music, with its current brand of street clothing, the lone but loudest medium of expression of the young's aching hunger to be their own selves.

This year, Lee USA supported the country's current crop of young rock musicians when it sponsored the rock concert during the anniversary of Pulp magazine.

Since rock music possesses the boldness to break out of the mold, Lee's clothes are basic but leave the wearer enough space to create a style that's distinctly his or her own.

The right attitude helps in the appreciation of Lee's collection of rocking street wear—sexy low-hip, tattered and distressed denims, deconstructed tees, sexy bra tops in flaming colors and hot pants.



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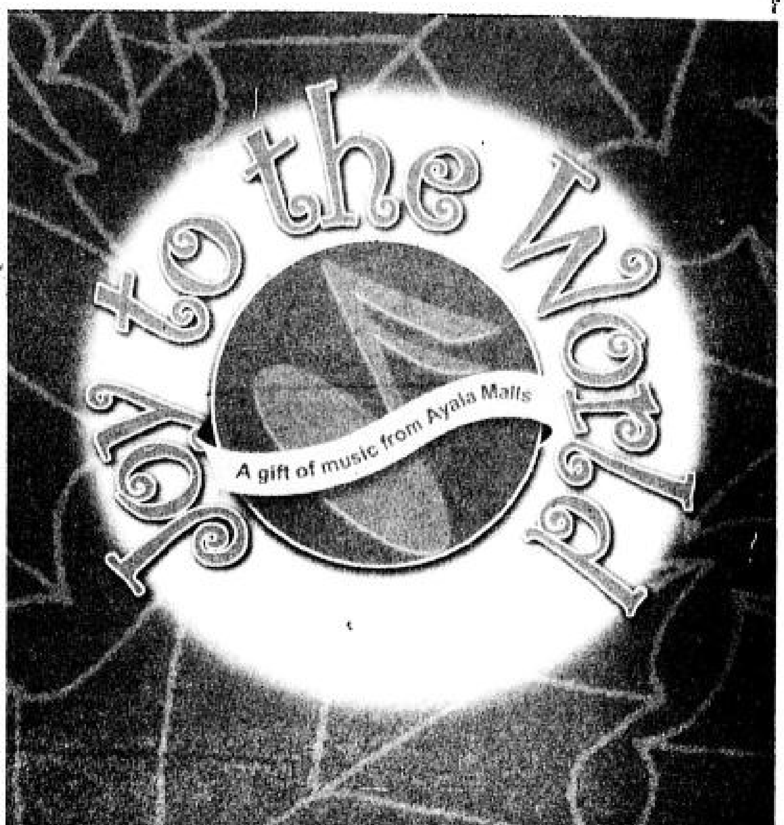
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The ugly truth about beauty

> Unless one learns to carve one's own concept of beauty from what one has been naturally endowed with, there can be no end to the vain pursuit of beauty for its own sake

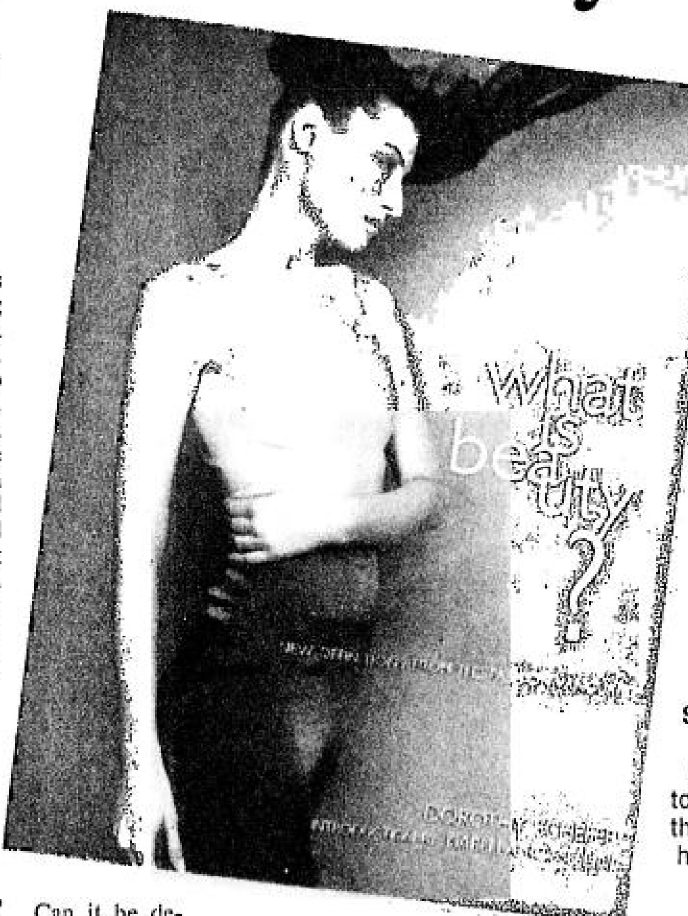
What Is Beauty?
New Definitions from the Fashion Vanguard
By Dorothy Schefer
Introduction by Isabella Rossellini
Universe

BY CHERISH GARCIA-HERNANDEZ
Contributor

REVIEW

BACK IN 1984, I was a bridesmaid for an aunt's wedding and I remember the makeup artist putting lipstick on only half of my upper lip to make it appear thinner. Apparently my full mouth was not aesthetically pleasing, and thus the need to resort to tricks to downplay it. Fast-forward to 1995, at my own wedding, where my lips were painted a deep plum red all over. Full lips were all the rage and suddenly I was blessed because I would never need the much coveted silicone injections. The funny thing is, my face never changed. I looked exactly the same, yet it was the changing face of what was perceived as beautiful that determined how other people saw me.

We are brought up to cultivate our inner selves and we are fed mantras and parables about how our inner selves are what truly matters and yet we grow up in a world where we are constantly being judged by our looks. As if that is not hard enough, the definition of beauty is constantly evolving and is often determined by what the mass media decide is beautiful. One moment, blonde hair, blue eyes and voluptuousness à la Marilyn Monroe is the golden standard. A few decades later, androgynous heroin chic is what's beautiful. But what really is beauty? Can it be defined, or is it an abstract principle simply evolving endlessly?



AUDREY Hepburn being made up by Kevyn Aucoin

STYLIST Polly Mellen is topless in this denim hoop skirt by Gaultier.

Age-old question

Fashion editor Dorothy Schefer's collection of quotes, essays and photographs in her book "What is Beauty?" attempts to shed light on the age-old question. Notable writers like Holly Brubach and Michael Gross, fashion insiders like Anna Wintour and the late Liz Tilberis, various photographers including Richard Avedon and Herb Ritts, as well as big-name designers like Karl Lagerfeld and Calvin Klein, all put in their two-cents' worth on the subject of beauty. Not only their definition of it but as well as the issues concerning it. For instance, the rise of eating disorders supposedly spurred by super waifs like Kate Moss; or the alarming increase in cosmetic procedures that seems to be the norm for many women nowadays.

The layout of the book is very modern. The book is put together like a fashion magazine spread. The text is not overwhelmingly long; it is very insightful with many new and interesting ideas. One of the more provoking ones is from Fran Lebowitz. She wonders how we can accept that levels of intelligence simply varies from person to person and yet we find it difficult to accept that physical attributes are genetically predisposed and thus vary as well. Like, we know that there is an Albert Einstein born once every number of years and we accept that. We don't measure our intelligence against his. On the other hand, even in our early teens, girls tend to compare themselves to what they see in fashion magazines and end up unhappy with their looks when they fall short of what they see. And, of course, we will always fall short. How can we compare ourselves to an airbrushed, professionally made up, professionally lit and photographed image of someone with a superiorly symmetrical bone structure to begin with? Cindy Crawford was once quoted to say, "Even I don't look like Cindy Crawford!" Still, easier said than done. Before leaving the house we will still reach for that tube of lipstick and wand of mascara, in a feeble attempt to look better than we did when we got out of bed in the morning. The thing is, most of the time it helps, and when we look good, we feel good.

Beauty intimidates

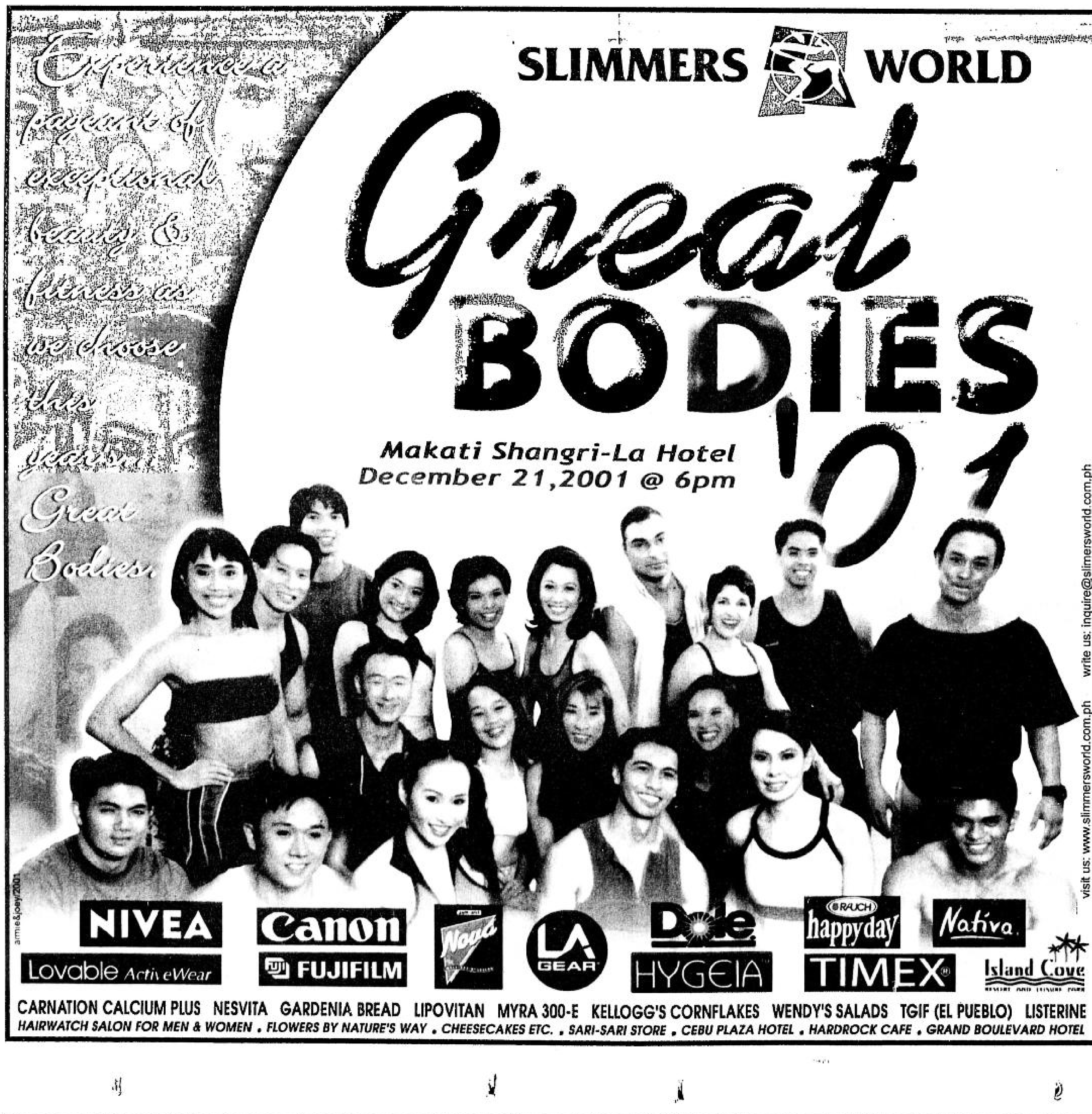
The other day, I caught a piece on Discover Channel about beauty. They said that studies show that good-looking people are often treated better than average looking people. Furthermore, they even get higher salaries and benefits given the same qualifications. Why? Because beauty intimidates. It renders one speechless as our brain receptors try to understand what we are seeing. This is a sad fact of life that is ironically changing, not because the human race has finally learned to see people for what they are, but rather because the standards of beauty are changing. Ethnicity is slowly gaining exposure and the world is slowly starting to appreciate beauty in all colors and forms. Nordic, Caucasian ice queens with patrician noses and high cheekbones are still the norm, but dark-skinned women with round faces, like Alec Wek, are also permeating our consciousness. The same goes for Asian beauties like Lucy Liu or Latina beauties like Penelope Cruz. But, yes, they are still beauties, extraordinary ones at that. However, consider this, for as long as we aspire to unreachable standards of beauty, we will never be happy.

To quote Holly Brubach, "those who live their lives in pursuit of beauty are doomed." Just look at all those expressionless women who have succumbed to Botox and plastic surgery—they are never contented with the way they look. They are 60 years old and delude themselves into thinking they can look 30.

At the end of the day, there is nothing wrong with wanting to look our best. That is, as long as it does not become a source of discontentment or unhappiness. After all, what is beauty? For all that has been said and written about it, there is still no answer. So make your own definition and let yourself be the standard you measure up against. As the great Gloria Steinem advised, "If you can learn to like how you look—and not the way you think you look—it can set you free."

Available at Powerbooks

E-mail the author at cherishgh@yahoo.com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PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's portrait by portrait photographer Rupert Jacinto, which hangs at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang Palace provides the backdrop for Jacinto and the book team who recently photographed the President for the book, "A Celebration of the Filipino: Portraits of an Era." The President's portrait signifies the final and official closing of the pictorials for the coffee-table book, which is now ready for publication, published by the Advertising Foundation of the Philippines. Flanking the President are (from left) Adfoundation executive director Linda Gamboa, Rupert Jacinto, Tina Jacinto and Julie Hidalgo.

Jacinto's portraits out by 2002

WELL-KNOWN portrait photographer Rupert Jacinto has announced that the book, "A Celebration of the Filipino: Portraits of an Era" is now ready for publication.

The book focuses on the country's four living Presidents.

Jacinto has apologized for the long delay in the launching of the coffee-table book attributing it to the political crisis in 2000, which led to the replacement of President Joseph Estrada by then Vice, now President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo following Edsa II.

The transition, according to Jacinto, required changes in manuscripts. The copublisher, The Advertising Foundation of the Philippines, represented by executive director Linda Gamboa, wanted to include a photo of Macapagal-Arroyo and her family after she became president.

Included in "Celebration," aside from photographs of the incumbent, are portraits of Presidents Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada, as well as the presidential children and their families.

More departure dates for Asiana snowy getaways

PASSENGER Service of the Year awardee Asiana Airlines (OZ) has increased departure dates for its snowy vacations in five-day and six-day packages. Asiana will depart on Dec. 23, 24, 25, 26 and 28 for these special winter packages that include ski suits as special giveaways.

The tour is inclusive of basic ski lessons and equipment rental at a nearby ski resort, either the Hyundai Sungwoo Resort or Yong Pyong Dragon Valley Ski Resort. Visitors can also choose to spend Christmas Eve in these winter resorts.

Youngsters will also enjoy trips to two of Korea's theme parks. The package includes tours to both Lotte World Adventure in Seoul, Asia's largest indoor theme park, and Everland, with its famous dancing bears and wild ultra-modern rides. The trips through these theme parks, both of which are also celebrating Visit Korea Year 2001, is a must for any tourist.

Accommodations are at super deluxe class hotels in Seoul. An English or Mandarin-speaking guide accompanies visitors throughout the tour.

Asiana's winter packages start at $682 per passenger for twin sharing in the five-day package and $791 for the six-day package. Parents are encouraged to bring the whole family with children's fares reduced by as much as 67 percent.

For those too busy this Christmas, Asiana has arranged a winter package tour for a minimum of 10 passengers until February 2002.

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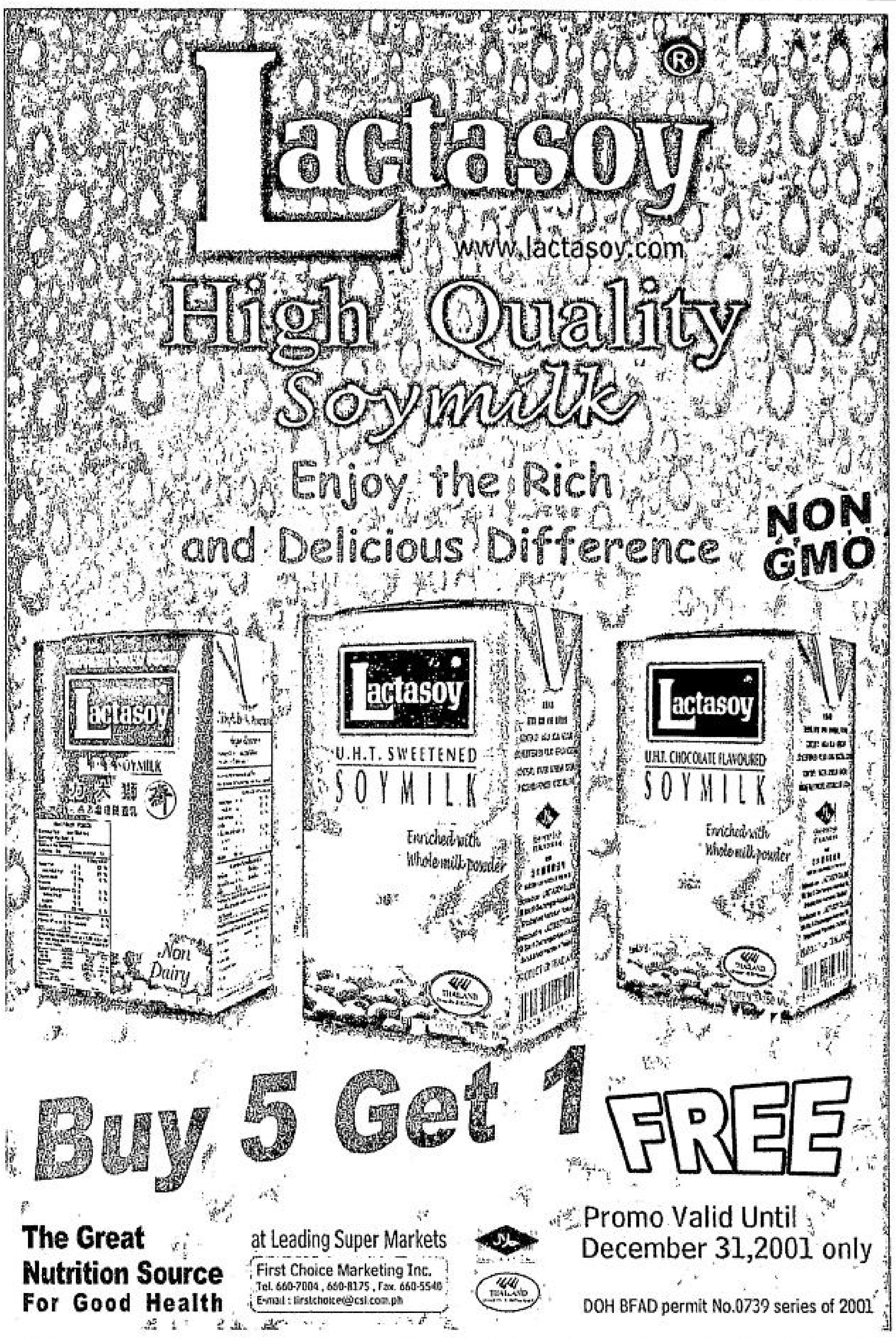

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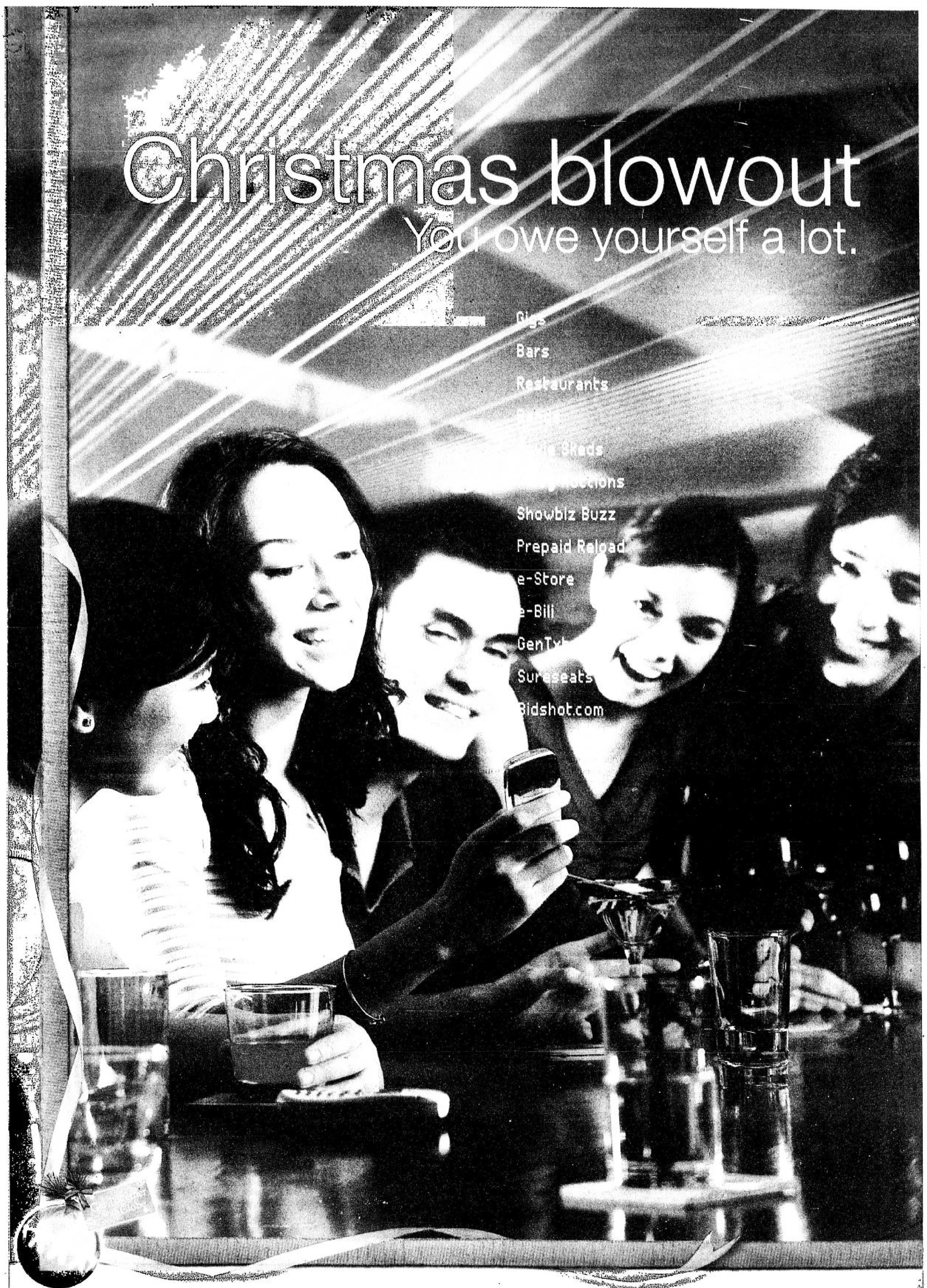
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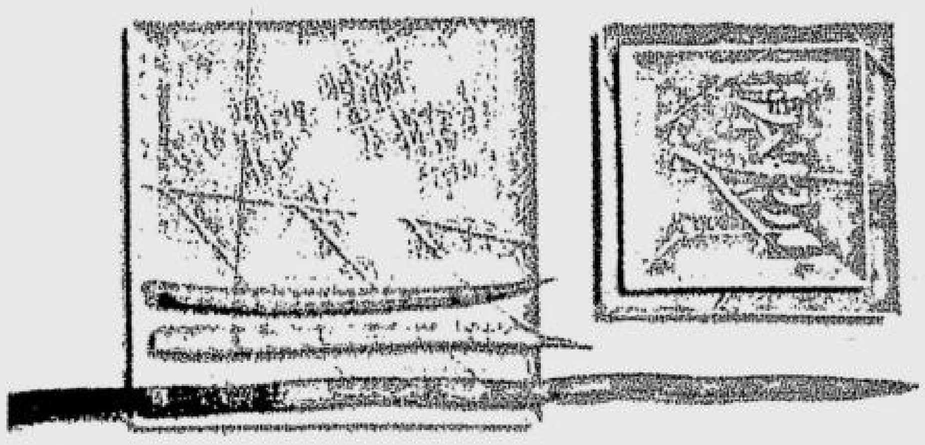


"**LEAF** Collection" by Tortu traces the fine lines of leaves and bursts with the powerful colors of an Asian summer.

THE SYMMETRY of form is underlying even in the asymmetrical layer of lines in this pair of vases designed by Christian Tortu, called "Empreinte" on celadon and white.

FORMS AND FUNCTIONS

Orientalia dominates

BY CATHY SALDAÑA-NOLIDO
Contributor

THE FLUIDITY of organic forms merges with the crisp simplicity of contemporary shapes in this mélange of ideas and concepts from the Maison & Objet Exposition in Paris, which showcases Asian-inspired collections by Christian Tortu and new moderns by selected European designers in the "Vibration Europeene" show.

The spirit of the International Style animates the various furnishings and accessories that dominate the current stream of design consciousness. Bridging the methods of the East and West, accommodating material preferences from metal to terracotta, the objects on exhibit form a tableau of functional forms that circles around the new design classics. Updated, globally accepted and revered, tracing the lines of historical and organic silhouettes with the stencil of modern thoughtfulness—this is the International Style.

Kipling was wrong. The East and West don't only meet, they merge and coalesce

Influences

By understanding today's needs at home and other built environments, designers have cropped their visions of accessorizing and furnishing spaces to provide the market with statements that merge tropical and indigenous forms with the sleek straightness of modern cabinetry and neo-modern furniture. With increasingly global trading, travel and the Web making the international village a reality, what used to be appreciated in Asia alone has propelled Western designers to borrow traditional Oriental influences in a styling marriage. At the recently concluded Maison & Objet Exposition in Paris, some European designers highlighted their collections with the lilting sophistication of forms inspired by the graciousness of bamboo or the nobility of celadon. The message was clear. The enjoyment of antiques, of prized traditional ceramics, glazed stoneware and other homegrown accessories does not always have to be in consonance with similar furniture and cradling interiors.

What is happening is the recognition of the possibilities of powerful combinations and contrasts of materials and technologies, of colors and shapes. What is important is the thematic consistency.

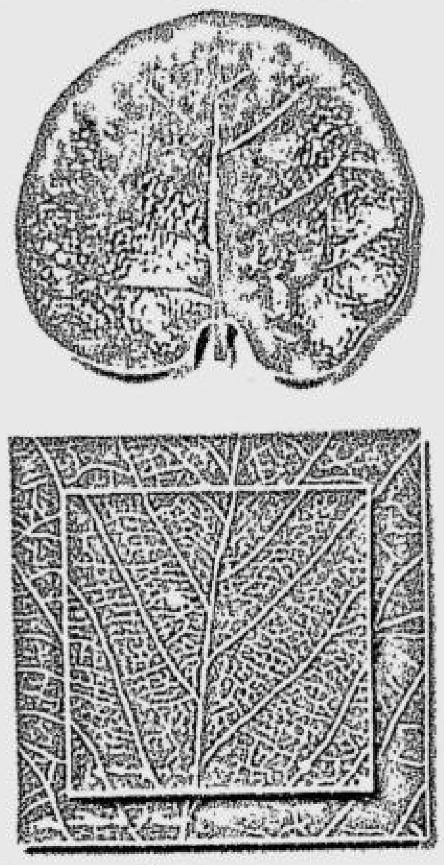
The Asian mystique is influencing western styles. A trip to a tropical spa, a diving expedition in Anilao, Batangas, a Balinese dance, a Thai massage, a walk by a row of shops in India—these conjure images that inspire designs. Where medicine, health, food and fashion are influenced, interiors and accessories follow. The nuances are lovingly traced and the organic, tropical forms become part of the new classics in designing.

This natural, invigorating and regenerative spirit as a result softens the new moderns. Homes become cozier and consistent contrasts make for a visual interplay of intricacy and delight.

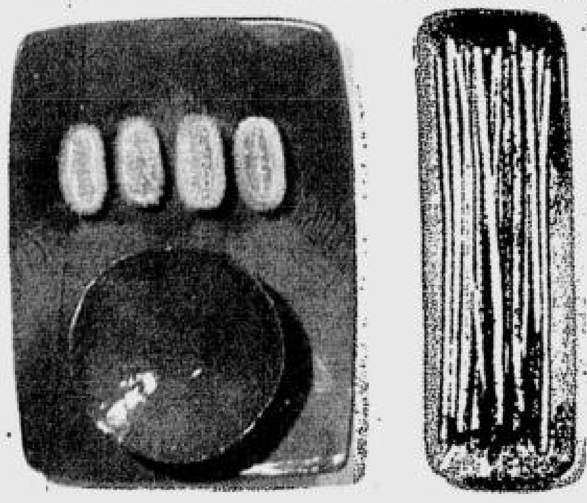
Sheer beauty

The sheer beauty of organic forms is celebrated in pure material origin. Colors are familiar and untainted. The materials and design inten-

ORIENTALIA/p.F8

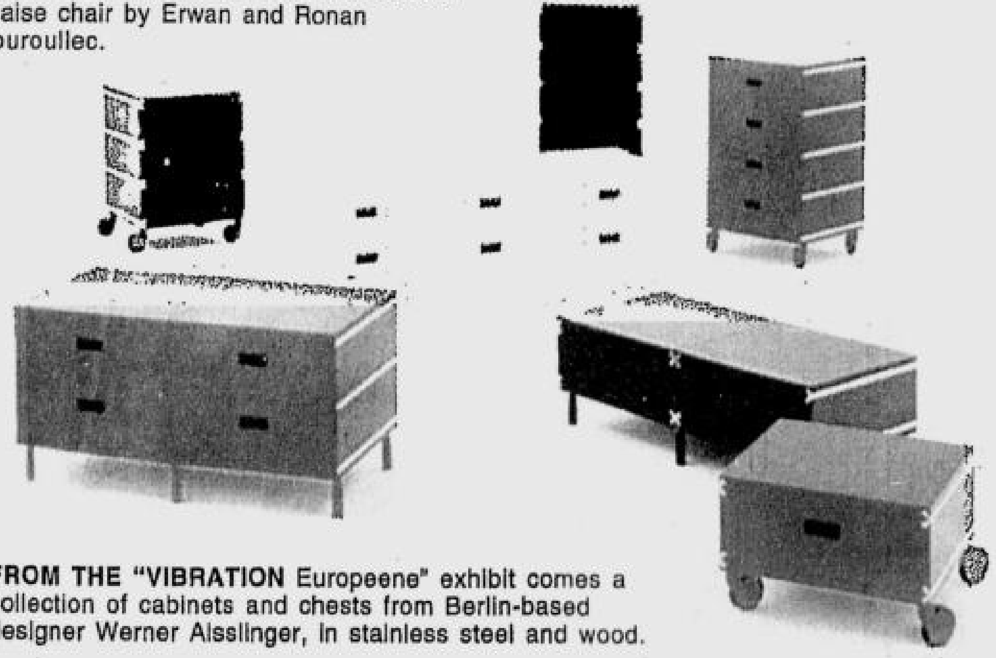


MORE leaves and natural adornments to brighten up table-settings throughout the world, as the next years signal graciousness and natural accessories blending well with the International Style.



TORTU celebrates the design influence of the Asian traditions in this set of tableware, celadon-glazed, organic and wonderfully geometric.

SLEEKNESS shines through the thin sections of stainless steel in this outdoor chaise chair by Erwan and Ronan Bouroullec.



FROM THE "VIBRATION Europeene" exhibit comes a collection of cabinets and chests from Berlin-based designer Werner Aisslinger, in stainless steel and wood.

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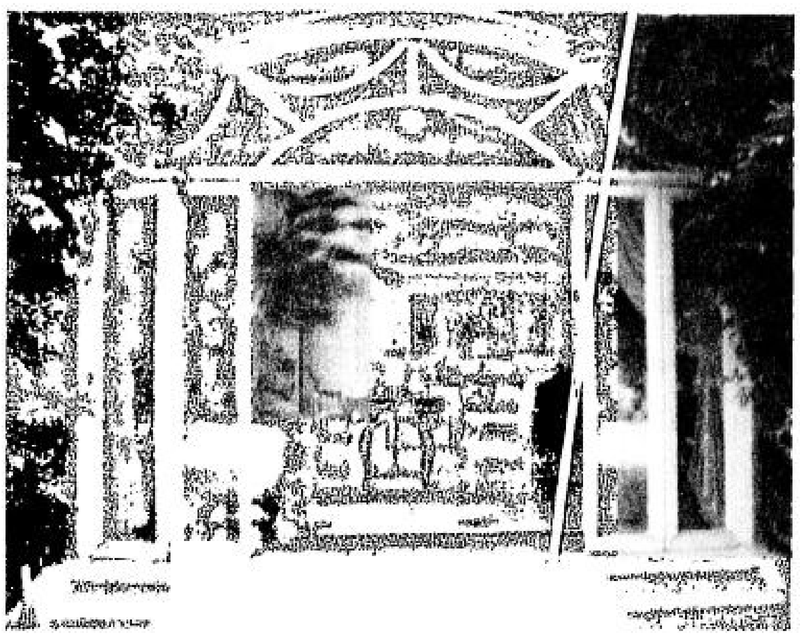
Mediterranean sheen in sultry setting



VIEW of the foyer from the garden, featuring Italian bronze table

By Avie Gochoco-Perez
Contributor
Photos by Chito Vecina
VISUAL CONCEPT BY ALBERT AVELLANA

THIS mansion in South Forbes Park feels like old Europe frozen in time in an Asian setting. Perhaps it even outdoes in size and décor some of the opulent French and Italian villas seen in big Hollywood productions where the ladies, prim and proper, and their wigged gentlemen enjoy grand balls. This mansion in Forbes, after all, lays claim to 1,500 sq m of floor space. That's about, say, 10 times the size of a big-ish condo unit today. The mansion and, outside it, a gazebo big enough to be a separate house, a swimming pool and small gazebo beside it, and a manicured garden all sit on 2,500 sq m of some of the most expensive lands in Metro Manila.

Monaco-inspired

Architect Gerry Contreras designed and dressed up this mansion about a decade ago. He was on a coach tour of Monaco "where Grace Kelly reigned and died," the genial host recounts, when he saw "this house in terra cotta and black and white" from the bus window. The beauty of the house in the Mediterranean coast so struck him that as the bus moved forward, he found himself wending his way to the back of the bus, hanging on to the sight of the house as long as he could. The next day, he took a cab to go to the same spot. "I didn't need to take pictures, I have a photographic memory," he says. Ivy crept on portions of the walls. Balconies protruded from the walls.

ROMAN bas relief in stone in the breakfast room. The cobweb chairs were made in Italy.

"I was so inspired by that house, I adapted it here," Gerry says. "The house is Italian-inspired but it is very Filipino."

Instead of ivy on the walls, bougainvillea climbs the facade of the mansion. Instead of terra-cotta walls, the Forbes mansion's exterior walls are painted the brownish red color of terra cotta. Instead of the small windows of the Monaco house, the Forbes mansion has large windows to let in the tropical breeze.

Gerry also opened up the walls. An entire side of the Forbes mansion on the upper ground floor has beveled glass doors that fold to the sides to let in the sights, sounds and smells of the well-manicured garden. The living and dining rooms and breakfast nooks are, therefore, very bright and airy. There are no dark corners here. Everything is so open to nature that an unexpected, drastic change in weather—from clear and sunny to dark and oh-so-windy—got Gerry hollering to some of the 14-member household staff to "please close all the [folding] doors" and later, to "please sweep the leaves" that got blown in.

The Forbes mansion, unlike its Monaco counterpart, has a very clean Filipino "never used" kitchen, which Gerry calls "the Silver Room." It is where huge glass vases and candleholders and the owner's collection of silver objects wait until they're polished and trotted out to grace gatherings and parties. The "dirty kitchen" is not shown guests: here, the *manangs* hold court and it is here, in her pristine white uniform, one of them whips up a specialty of the house, *sopa de mariscos*.

Attention grabbers

The lure of gleaming Swarovski crystal in the shape of a flowering lotus plant calls the guests' attention at the foyer-cum-living room. Gerry says it is possibly the biggest Swarovski crystal item in the country. Well, the owner of the house has hardly been shy in investing in art and décor items. European and Oriental antiques sit on Baroque bureaus and tables.

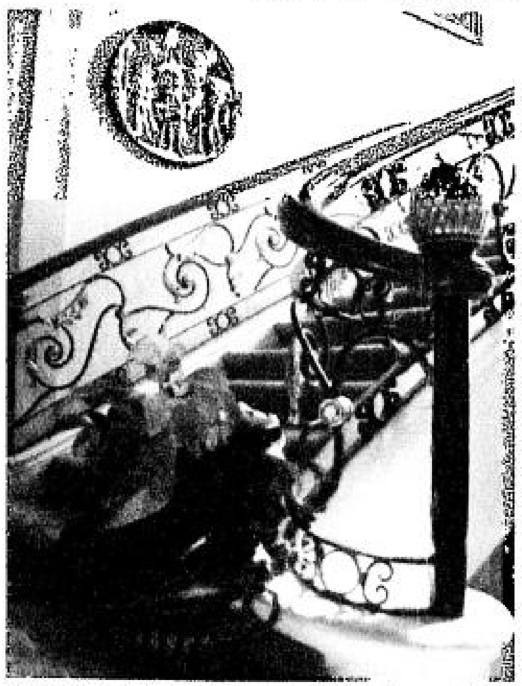
A centuries-old brass statue of the Indian goddess of fire—one of the most expensive pieces in the mansion—guards the 14-seater dining set. Gerry said the owner was lucky to beat to the draw the daughter of a former President when he acquired the piece locally from an antique dealer.

Upstairs are the bedrooms. In the master bedroom are zebra rugs strewn on the ivory-colored carpet, along with Persian rugs. This, after all, is a bachelor's bedroom also. The master bath is huge and luxurious. The bathtub is in bold black.

There is one guest bedroom decorated in the European style, another in the Oriental style. One other room has not had any occupant for three years, ever since the owner's mother died. The 24—yes, all of 24—artificial Christmas trees Gerry pulled out from all corners of the house to make way for today's photographs have made mother's bedroom their temporary home.

At the end of the upstairs hallway—actually a huge sitting room—is an altar that occupies an entire wall. Three religious images, as big as they come, lord it over this space. This space is perhaps the most Filipino spot in this Italian-inspired house.

MEDITERRANEAN/p.F4



GRAND staircase made of cast iron with bronze leaf motifs

ITALIAN grills done by Arte Español

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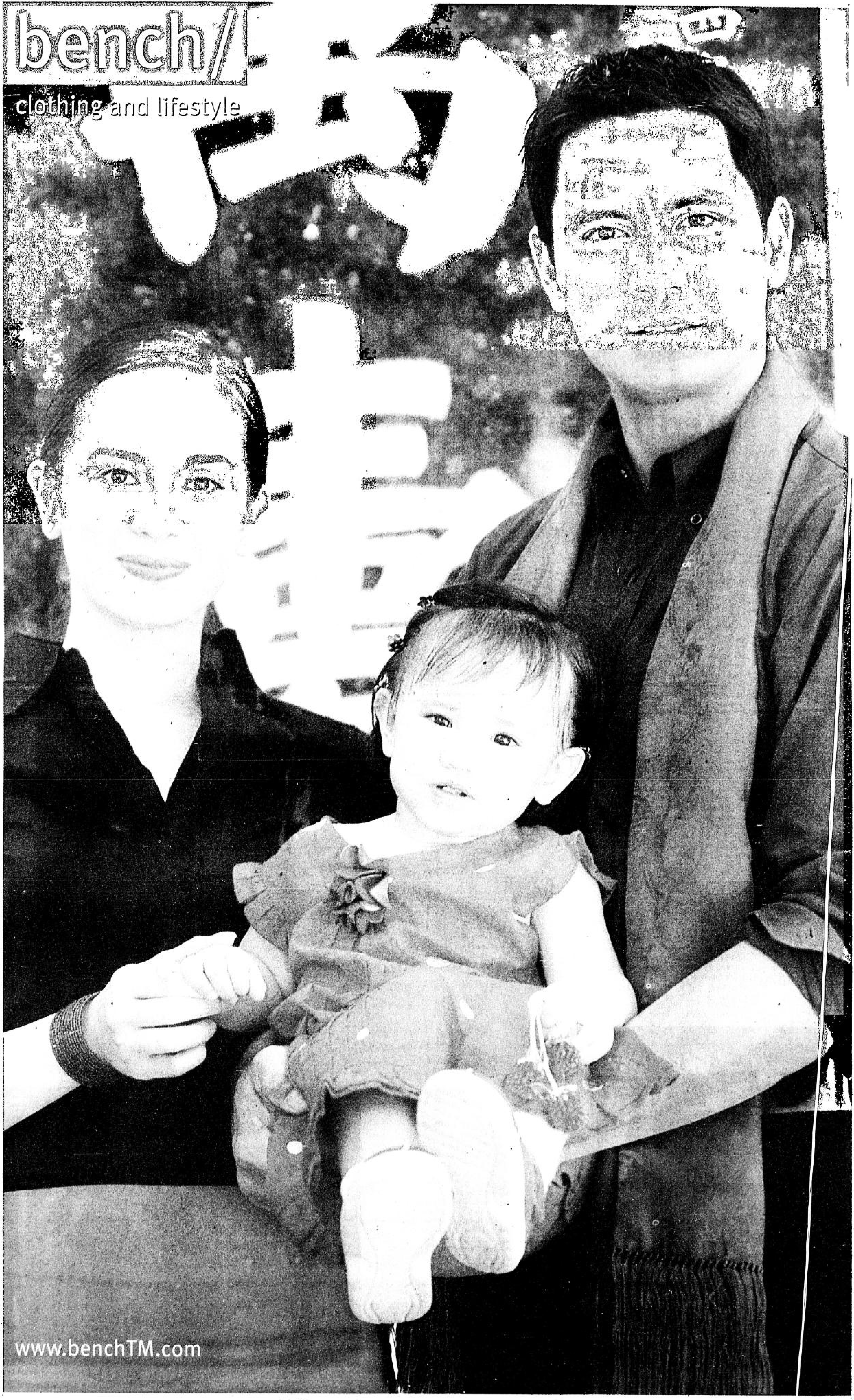
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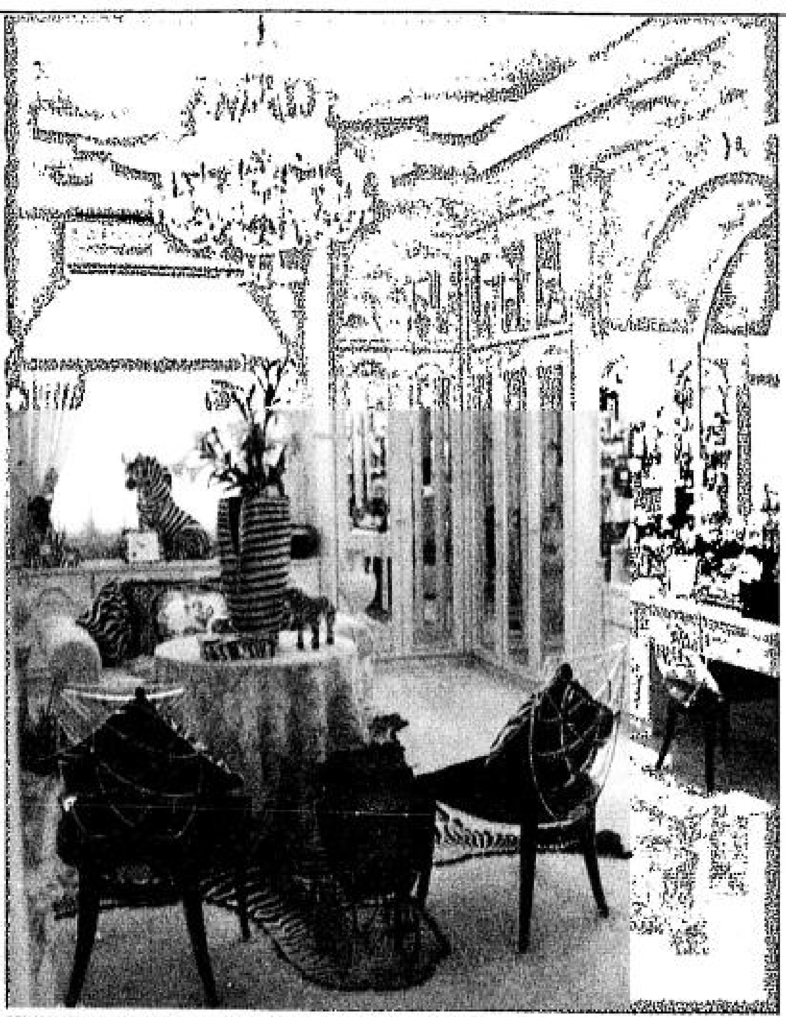
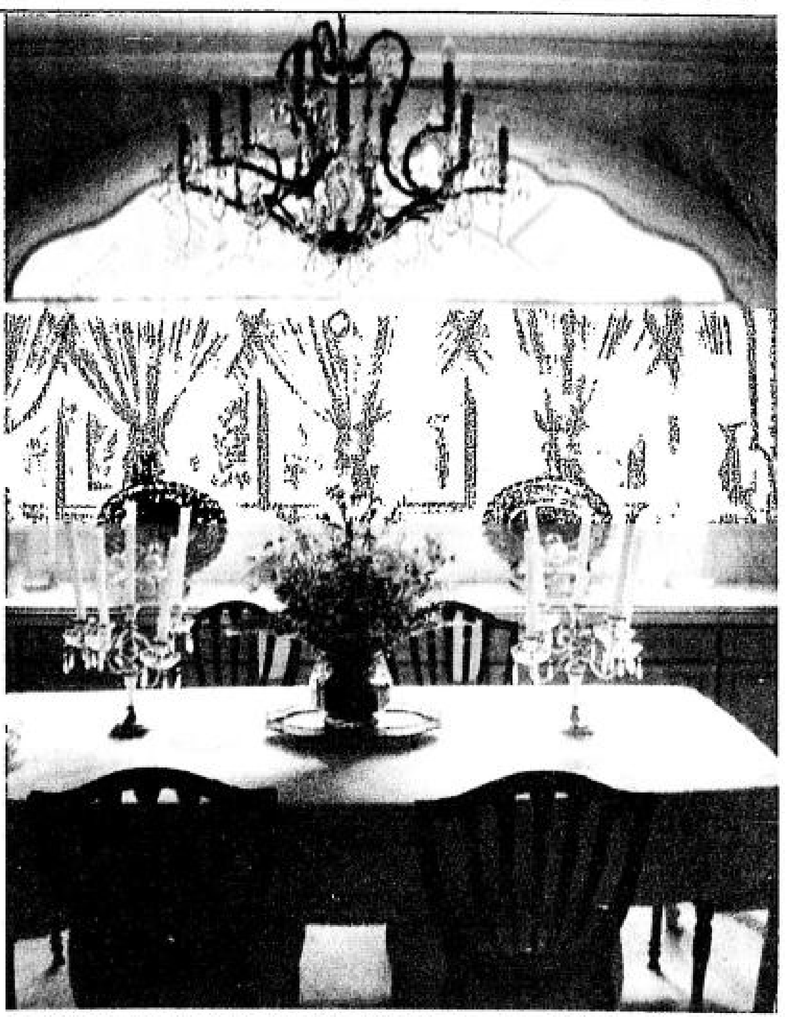
SITTING area of master bedroom is done in bone, upholstery walls and accented with leopard carpet.



THE WHITE dressing is accented with zebra accessories, including the pillows, vase and area carpet.



CLASSIC elements in the formal dining room—Chippendale chairs, silk curtains made of jabots and fringes, European brass plates.

Mediterranean sheen in sultry setting

A mansion in South Forbes Park marries old and new worlds in a breathless dynamic of European furnishing and tropical comfort

(From page E2)

Better than Malacañang

The vines and leaves of the balusters of the stairs and balconies are, as Gerry designed them, in gold and matte black. Again, they remind one of a rich but bygone era when money was of no matter. The balcony upstairs overlooking the garden below reminds one of the balcony in Malacañang, no less, perhaps an even better version.

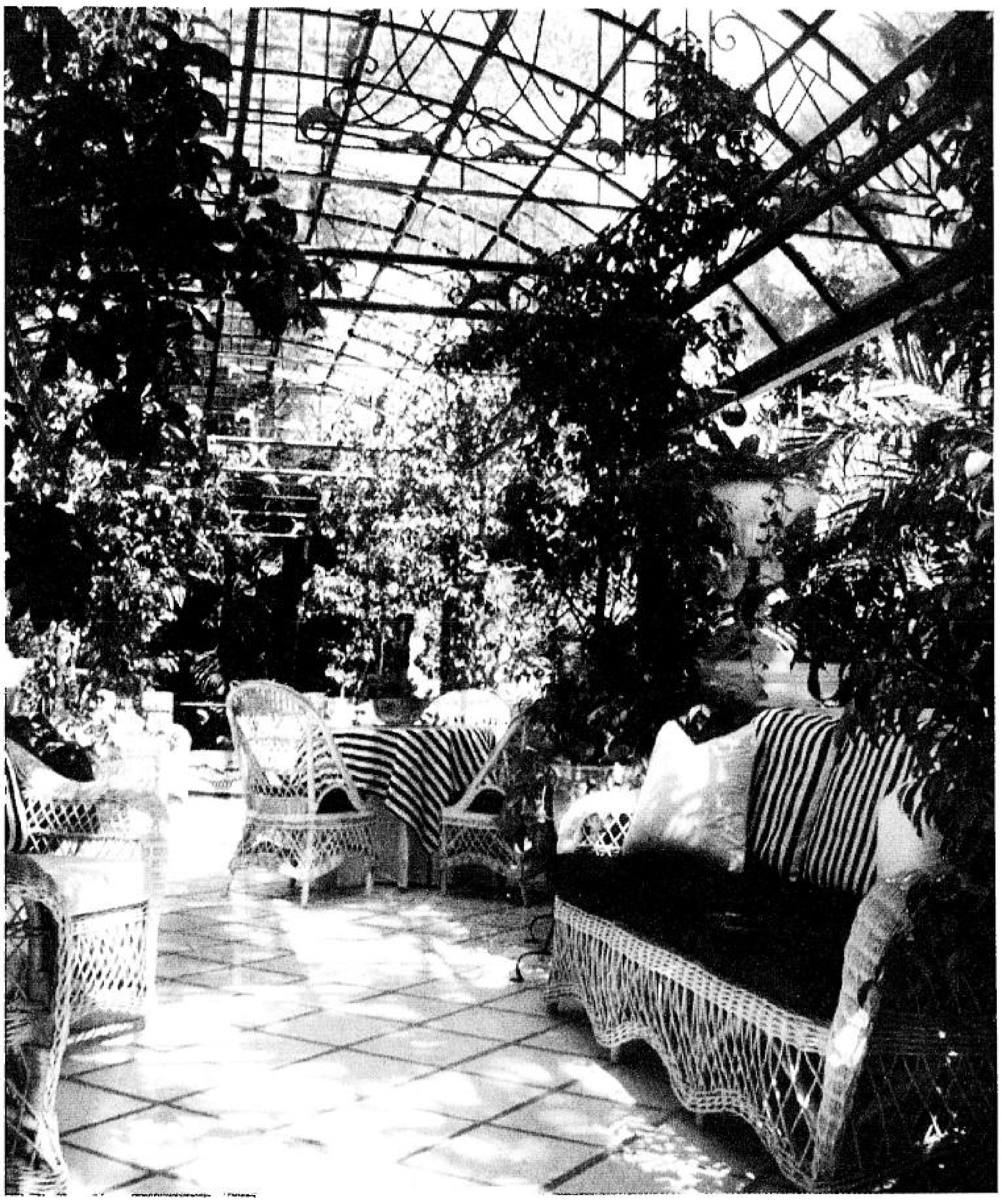
"Of course, this is not a budgeted house," Gerry notes, although he points out that he avoided partitions in the main house to achieve not only an airy feel but also a brightness within that no light bulb can give.

Crystal chandeliers, all from Europe, light up the house. Coral marble mixed with black and beige Italian marble downstairs, and shiny narra planks upstairs, gleam underfoot. Here, there and everywhere are European furniture, bronze statues mixed with Oriental jars, knickknacks and Persian carpets. A European Versailles antique clock sits on a mantel. "I have to have it tuned," Gerry almost apologizes. Extensive collections of Baccarats and Laliques are some of the precious objects the owner has chosen to display.

What is not on display, well, not very ubiquitously anyway, are nude paintings by Edades, Amorsolo, Galo, Ocampo, Olazo... All depict the female body. Does he have nude paintings of males? "Unfortunately, none," the owner says gamely. They grace the walls of the discotheque in the mansion's ground floor, complete with revolving red, yellow, blue lights and the many-faceted big glass ball that one imagines to throw sparks of light as the owner's guests gyrate to loud music. The enclosed discotheque is the most secure place for the paintings, the owner points out. For the time being, the disco is also home to many, many Christmas baskets waiting to be transported to the owner's friends.

The owner's favorite spot in the house? Not the disco, but the big gazebo. "I don't get lost there," the man says, quite matter-of-factly. The big gazebo is capped by clear Plexiglas. Garden sets in wicker occupy the deck of the gazebo. In here, one has an enviable view of the mansion and the simple green of the garden beneath. From here, the owner gets to bask in the sun or sit still under a canopy of twinkling stars at night.

A no-no in this mansion are plastic flowers. Fresh flowers are ordered and placed in the vases every week. Once in two months, hardy, indoor palms planted in huge Borneo jars are brought out to soak in the sun. Crawling vines with variegated, green heart-shaped leaves trail from the jars to the floor. When told about the superstition that such may bring bad luck to a homeowner, Gerry protests: "I believe in *feng shui*, but I also believe that all plants are lucky, being a creation of God."



GAZEBO or tea house with wicker and iron furniture

EUROPEAN Jacuzzi for as many as 12 with drapes and a granite statue

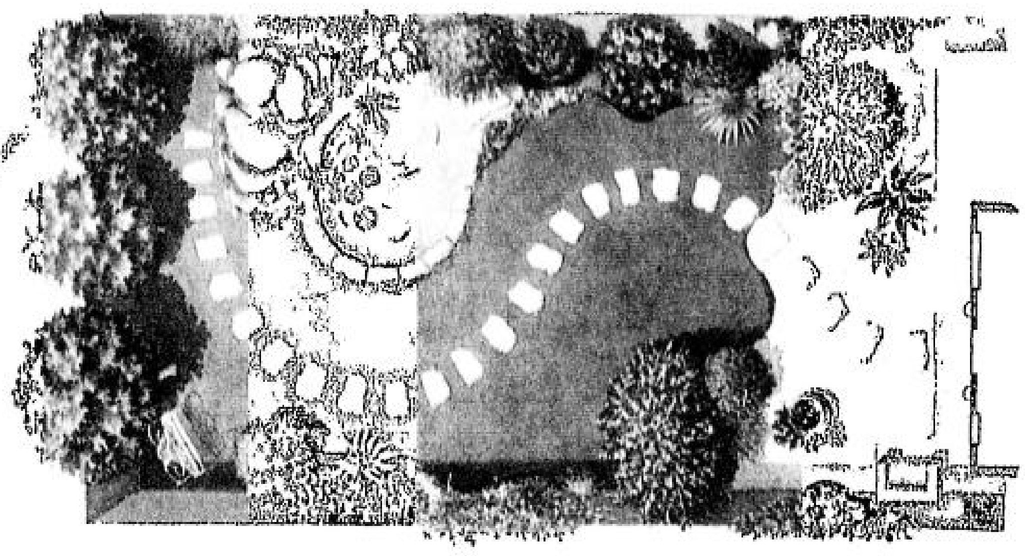
Prospective buyers

Once upon a time, a former President had offered to buy this mansion. You can easily move into one of your many other houses for rent, the former leader urged the owner. The owner was aghast. He couldn't think of throwing tenants out, just like that. Contracts with them have to be honored, he pleaded with the former President. Thankfully, the former leader pressed no further.

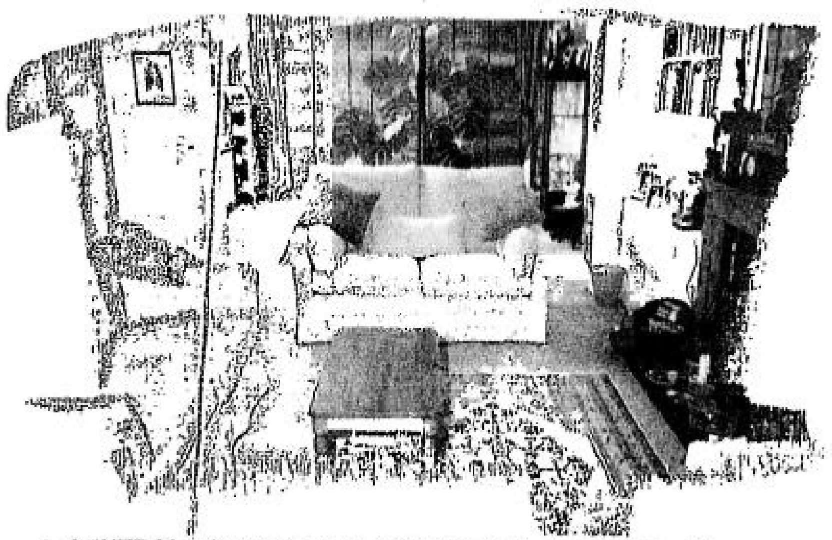
Another time, a former First Lady who used to rent the house beside the mansion stopped by, wanting to see the mansion. Fortunately, the owner was out and the security guards were and are trained to turn away surprise visitors courteously. Perhaps the former First Lady was also interested in the property.

For now, the owner is quite happy keeping the mansion in the family. The centuries-old wooden statue of St. Joseph the Carpenter, patron saint of the family, will probably see to that. The statue stands guard in a corner of the breakfast nook, which the owner uses for daily dining. This St. Joseph has saved lives for us, the owner asserts, adding that the image is miraculous. Perhaps, a tad miraculously, we can trust this St. Joseph to save this Forbes mansion—as he has done so far—from the ugly clutches of the economic crisis choking much of the life and beauty elsewhere in the metropolis.

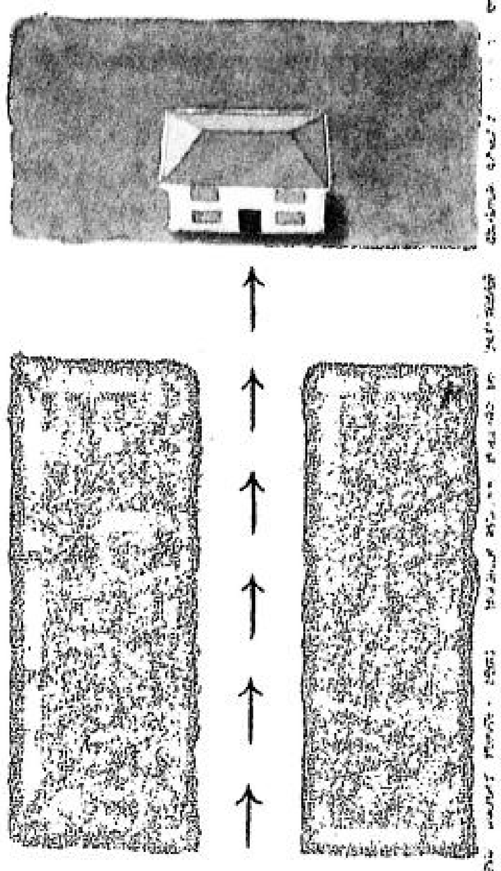
PORTRAIT of owner and gilt horse dominate the den. The style is dated, a mixture of leather and Italian marquetry with Oriental accents. The cabinets and moldings are in mahogany varnish, which go with teal green.



THE CURVED path, water feature, metal bench and plants in this back garden are all excellent feng shui.



A CENTRAL chandelier in a living room is good feng shui.



HOUSE situated at the end of a T junction not only has the chance of a wayward car crashing into its front but is also subjected to a constant assault from the fast-moving energy brought to its door by traffic. Living in a house situated on a curve or bend in the road allows the pace of the *ch'i* to slow, as well as of the cars themselves.

Garden books to bring harmony and beauty indoors

Feng Shui Before and After
By Stephen Skinner
Turtle Publishing
96 pages

BY TITA GIRON

IT is not easy to find a feng shui book that is simple and down to earth. Many authors tend to use a lot of words and illustrations in an effort to demystify this oriental art to readers. Sad to say, they only leave readers bored if not befuddled.

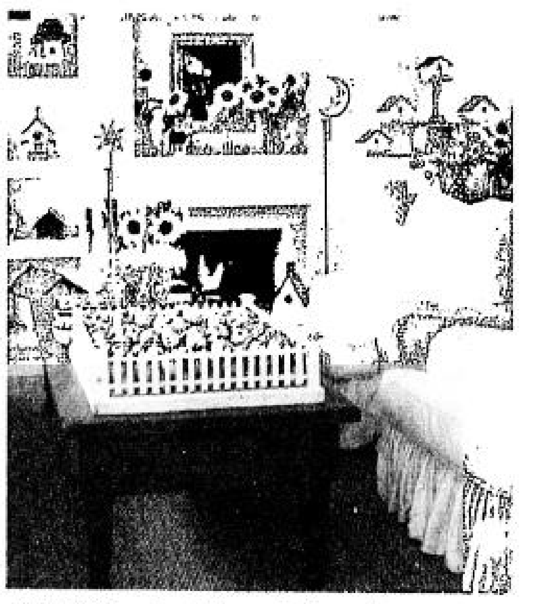
REVIEWS

"Feng Shui Before and After" is a welcome exception, particularly for folks like us who are lazy to look up interpretations of foreign words in footnotes and glossaries. The book is designed for folks who have never read anything about feng shui and wish to rearrange and redecorate the home, garden and office.

In plain and simple language, feng shui is described in the book as the art and science of encouraging positive influences in nature and environment to affect all aspects of one's life. Literally, the Chinese words mean "wind and water." Accordingly, feng shui works on the principle that we are surrounded by an invisible energy called the *ch'i*, whose movement is carried by water and wind. Where *ch'i* is absent, "life is barren and unproductive, but where it is present, life is rich and full of opportunities."

Author Stephen Skinner's easy style and grasp of the subject come from years of writing about feng shui and his frequent "escapes to the mystical East." A geographer who graduated from Sydney, Australia, he got interested in the Chinese art in the 1970s. His first book, "The Living Earth Manual of Feng Shui" was said to have sparked Western interest in the art. In those years, most information on the art was written in Chinese. He is credited for launching the world's first feng shui magazine, Feng Shui for Modern Living.

Skinner's book is divided into two sections. The first part explains feng shui and how the various principles can apply to you. As he promises, the application of the basic principles in your rooms and garden could produce amazing beneficial effects "on your health, wealth, career prospects, relationships, luck—even your love life!"



AGAINST a backdrop of clean lines and simple furnishings, a collection of folk art pieces and flowers give this living room a fresh, country-garden feeling. Focusing on a few decorative themes—birdhouses, apples and sunflowers—keeps this lighthearted look unified and uncluttered.

His style is straightforward. For example, the chapter on Alignment explains right away that lines affect the flow of energy. "*Ch'i* needs to accumulate in order to be beneficial. If it moves along straight lines, it gathers speed and becomes destructive." The author explains in the next paragraph that houses at the dead-end of a long road have bad feng shui. He then describes how to apply feng shui to reverse the bad effects.

Practicals

The second part of the book is all about practical application. It talks about rearranging furniture, what to do with colors, shape, and materials, how to position the doors, halls and stairs; and many more.

In addition, the book contains added features: before-and-after overhead room plans, artwork and photographs, and case studies proving how people actually revitalized their lives with feng shui.

By the way, it contains free sheets of acetate and graph paper to help the reader plan changes in design.

Available at National Bookstore

Garden Style Decorating
By Cynthia Bix and Editors of Sunset Books
Sunset Books
144 pages

IT'S not just the right book to give garden enthusiasts this Christmas. As the authors intended, the book is for special folks who long to bring bright, fresh-air beauty into their homes. The book, for sure, is also intended for city dwellers who are either garden-less or have very little space to indulge their green thumbs.

As with most Sunset books, "Garden Style Decorating" is lavished with beautiful photographs accompanied by generous how-to tips. Hundreds of photos feature inspiring garden-styled rooms, gardens, furnishings, and accessories. Every page is virtually a feast for the eyes and a dream walk through different garden-inspired rooms onto the verandah, and out to the garden.

The reader will no doubt make a full stop upon reaching the chapter on tablescapes. It gives motivating tips on how to make the dining table an imaginary canvas on which to create a "landscape" using garden-inspired tableware and accessories. Center photo shows how vegetables and fruits are used to deck the centerpiece instead of fresh flowers and foliage. Adding a dramatic touch to the overall design is the earthy colors of tableware, linens, and accessories.

Another heart-stopping chapter, "Beautiful Rooms," inspires the reader to create thematic designs that bring to mind nostalgic ideas ranging from Grandma's country garden to the simple Zen Eden. Photos to borrow ideas from include shots of living rooms, sunrooms, kitchens, bedrooms and dining areas.

"There are as many ways to style a garden room as there are gardens," the authors encourage readers. The underlying idea is to infuse the freshness of outdoors to the following basic elements: wall and floor treatments, furniture, ornaments and soft furnishings such as window coverings, upholstery and cushions. They should reflect nature as much as possible. The authors suggest natural materials like stone, wood, natural fibers and earthenware.

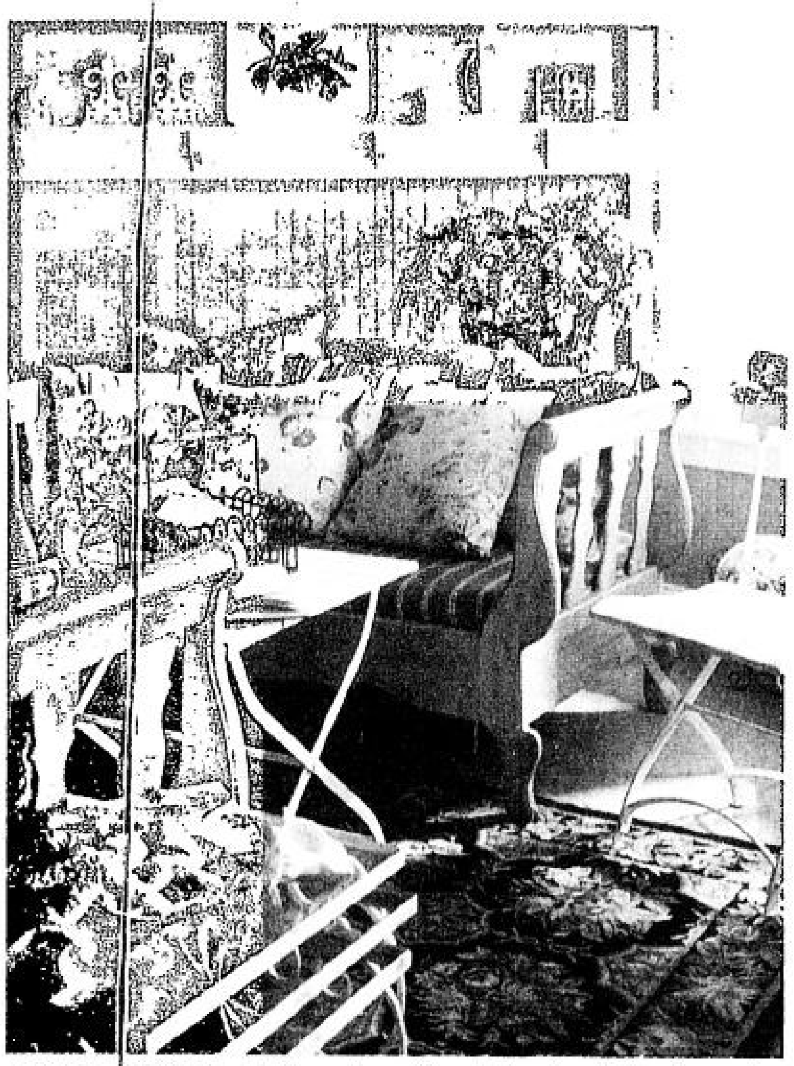
In addition, there are several special features to delight readers. These include ideas for collector's corner, tablescapes, fantasy verandah, cabana, fabulous flower arrangements, special effects and garden party.

The reader who is not familiar with the cabana is treated to a glimpse of an exotic room with dappled space, stark simplicity and plenty of room where the breeze can move around. A cabana is a serene retreat, the authors write. It is appointed with the utmost simplicity that invites serenity and peace of mind.

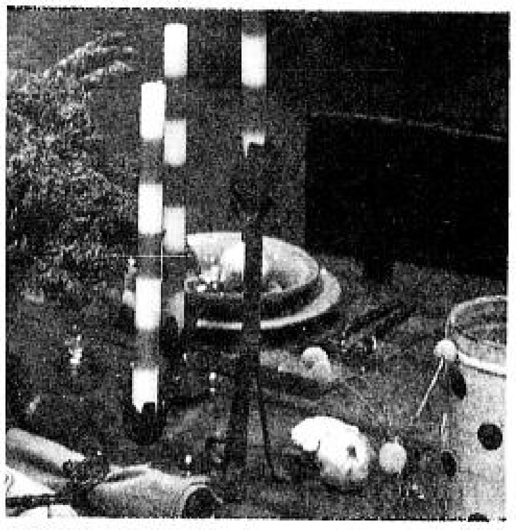
"Garden Style Decorating" is a visual delight but is nonetheless a decorator's treasure chest of creative ideas and information.

Available at National Bookstore

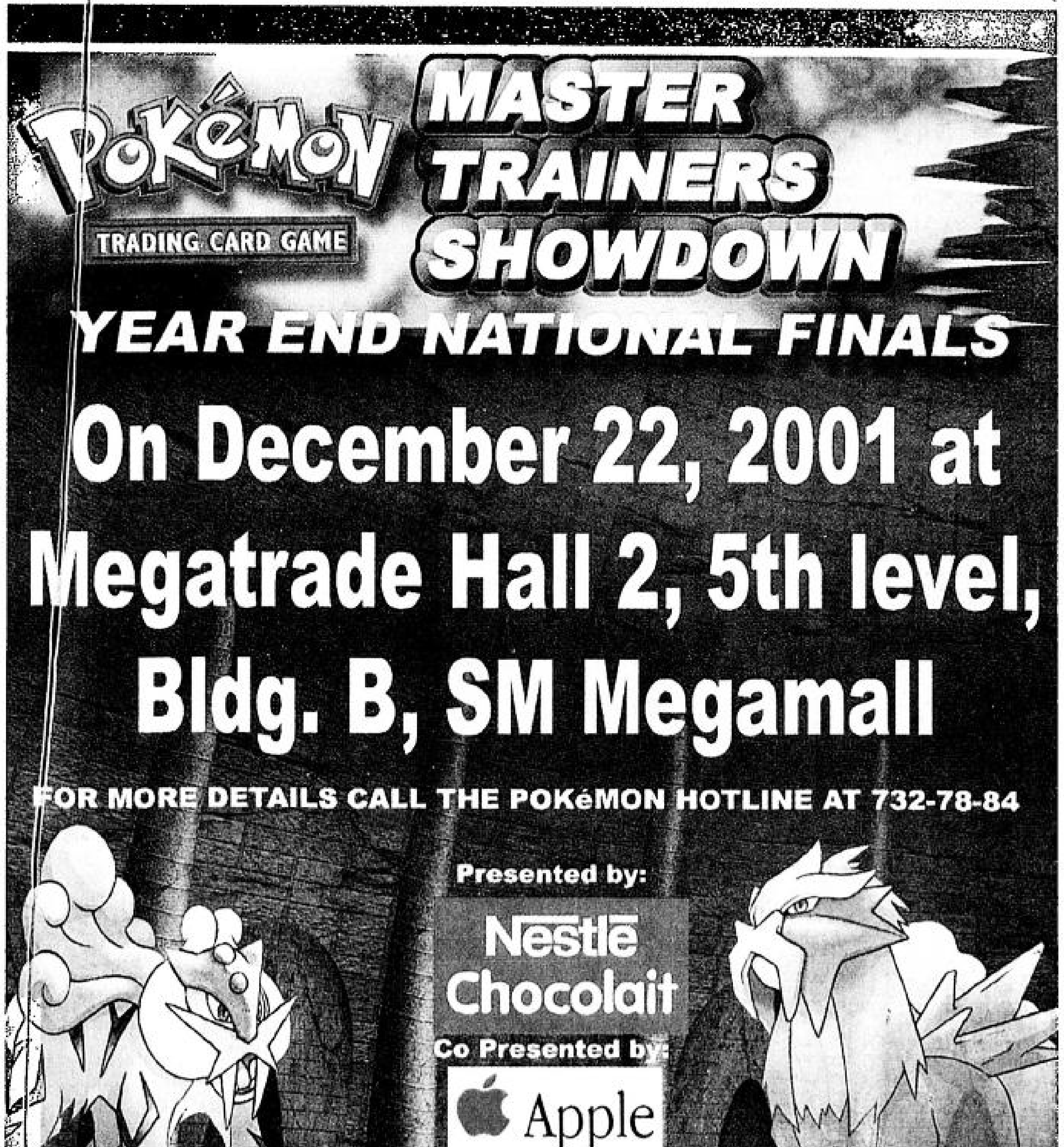
GAUZY panels of nearly transparent nylon become magical veils of illusion that transform a poolside cabana into a serene retreat. The panels are anchored top and bottom to the posts, so that they move in the breeze yet remain relatively stable. Sunlight falls on a grouping of pillows covered in French linen that's washable and surprisingly tough. Woven grass mats on the floor conjure up images of a Japanese teahouse or temple. The container-grown weeping mulberry is a dramatic sculptural shape against the white shingled wall.



ARCHITECTURAL details such as the plate rail with its decorative molding and the beadboard wainscoting give this room the look of a turn-of-the-century cottage. French outdoor café furniture mingles with gracefully shaped pine settees for invitingly informal yet sophisticated comfort. The palette is soft, from the green paint on the wall panels to the prints chosen for the cushions, hooked rug and handmade pillows.



A CENTERPIECE of vegetables and fruits creates a novel display whose earthy colors are repeated in the jaunty striped candles, tableware and linens (note the playful details such as frog and dragonfly napkin rings); a bowl of freshly puréed soup gets the garden touch with an edible garnish of nasturtium flowers; gathered around a centerpiece of foliage and hydrangeas, place-setting bouquets are cleverly contained in scooped-out artichoke "vases."



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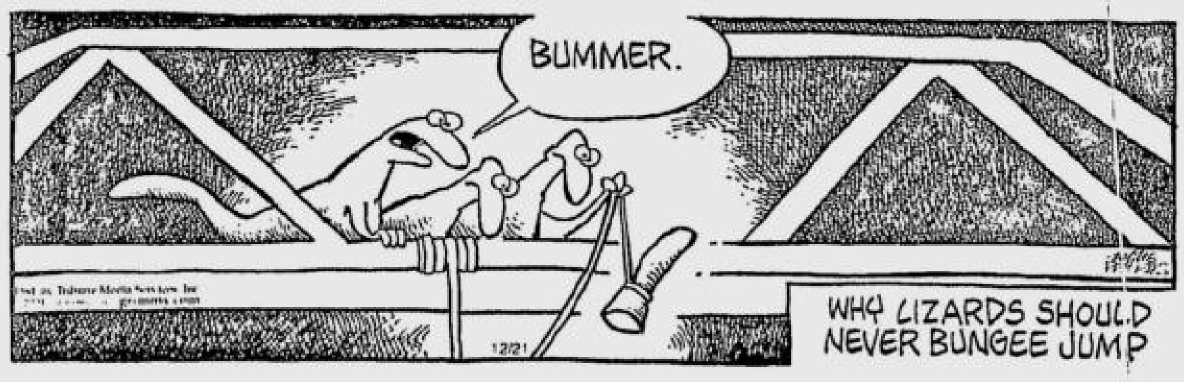
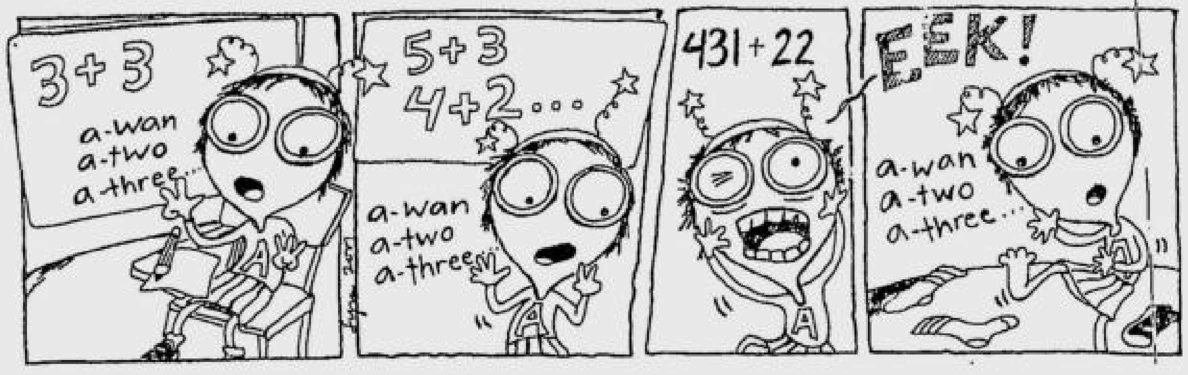

BUMMER.
WHY LIZARDS SHOULD NEVER BUNGEE JUMP
12/21

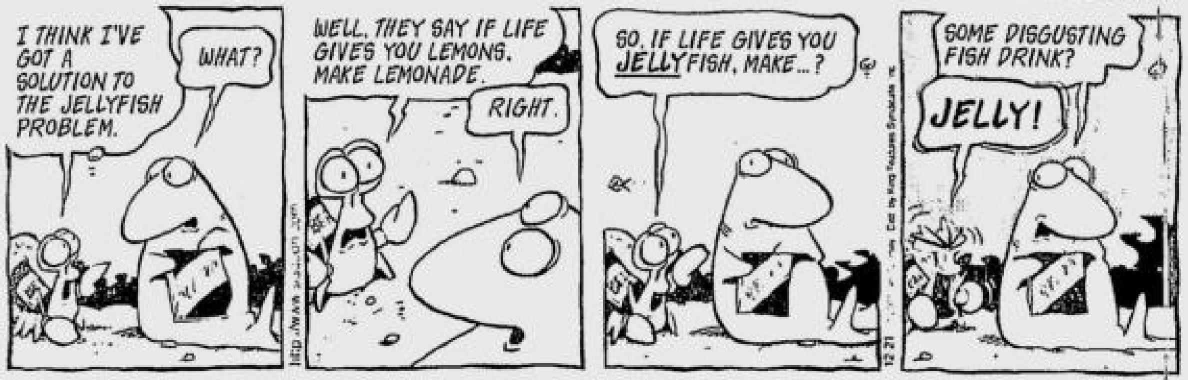
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


3+3
a-wan a-two a-three...
5+3 4+2...
a-wan a-two a-three
431+22
EEK!
a-wan a-two a-three...

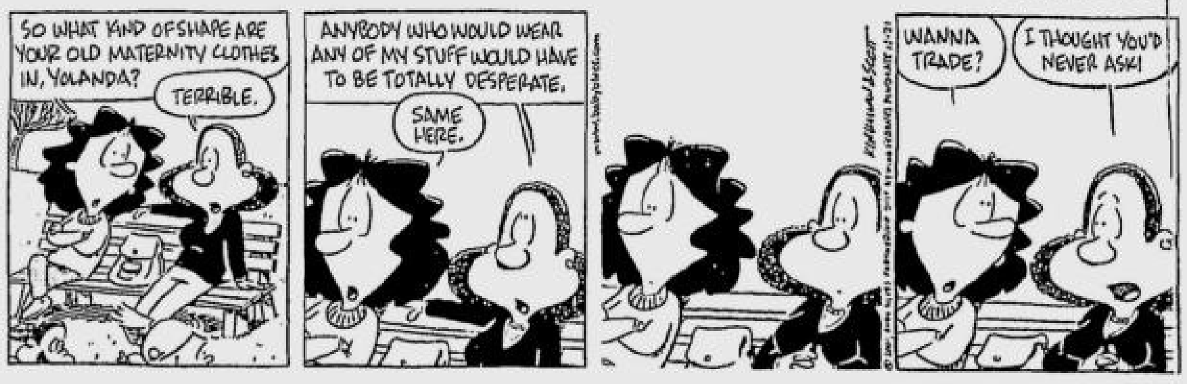
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


I THINK I'VE GOT A SOLUTION TO THE JELLYFISH PROBLEM.
WHAT?
WELL, THEY SAY IF LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS, MAKE LEMONADE.
RIGHT.
SO, IF LIFE GIVES YOU JELLYFISH, MAKE...?
SOME DISGUSTING FISH DRINK?
JELLY!
12-21

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


SO WHAT KIND OF SHAPE ARE YOUR OLD MATERNITY CLOTHES IN, YOLANDA?
TERRIBLE.
ANYBODY WHO WOULD WEAR ANY OF MY STUFF WOULD HAVE TO BE TOTALLY DESPERATE.
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HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Chris Evert, Frank Zappa, Phil Donahue, Jane Fonda

Happy Birthday: It's time to cast your fate to the wind and go after your dreams, hopes and wishes. If you believe in yourself and your abilities and set your mind on what it is you truly want, you will succeed. Your numbers are 8,15,18,27,32,41

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Pushing your opinions on others today could lead to the end of a friendship. Channel your energy into physical activities.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): It's best to stay put. Problems will develop if you are expected to travel any distance. Tell the truth if you can't make an event you promised to attend.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Try to go to new places or get involved in a different sport or club. Your interest in intellectual entertainment will bring you into contact with potential lovers.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Don't take on so much that you become frustrated. Concentrate on clearing up your work and preparing to take a little break.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You will be in a high-energy cycle so get moving and clear up loose ends. Get out and do things with good friends and family.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Get your books in order and your portfolio up to date. Year-end investments should pay off. Be sure to get enough rest.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Your emotions will be high and your spirit will soar. Don't hesitate to make a commitment or a promise.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Act quickly if you want to make the most of your financial possibilities. Check out investments that will bring you returns in the long run.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Your mind will be on socializing. Make your plans early so that you won't be disappointed. Dancing or enjoying one of your favorite sports should be on your agenda.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You will be in your glory if everyone comes to your place for a little festive cheer. Don't let your partner confuse you regarding your status. If he or she hasn't been treating you properly speak up.

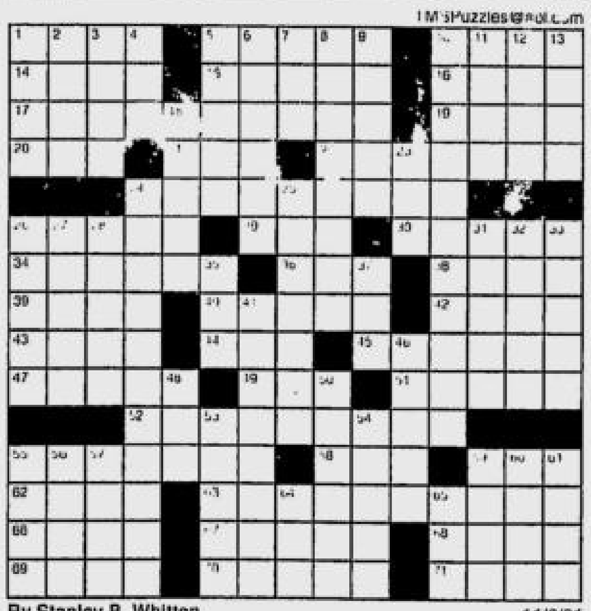
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Help a family in need. You will have a lot to offer those less fortunate. Being honest with yourself will help you to clear up any questions that you have regarding your relationships.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): You will accomplish a lot if you focus your energy on getting ahead at work. Heighten your reputation by putting in a little extra time and offer to finish a job.

Birthday Baby: You are meticulous, knowing and ambitious. You have creative talent and an ability to follow your own heart. You will gain the respect and admiration of those you encounter.

DAILY CROSSWORD

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



By Stanley B. Whitten
Highwood, IL

11/6/01

ACROSS
1 Washed-out
5 Earth tone
10 Unwrap fruit?
14 Household press
15 Wild Asian dog
16 Football great Graham
17 Office seekers
19 Groza and Brock
20 Writer Burrows
21 Encountered
22 Those born as twins?
24 Most worldly
26 One of David's songs
29 Absolutely!
30 Surrounding blockade
34 If not
36 Cash machine letters
38 Rider's whip
39 Sex grp.
40 Diagram, as a sentence
42 Poop
43 Rel. grouping
44 So far
45 Degraded
47 Brown tint
49 Std.
51 __ nous (confidentially)
52 Sea lab staff
55 Outstanding
58 A-Team member
59 Mineral spring
62 Animal fat
63 Popular nominee
66 __ bean
67 Speak pompously
68 Disney or Whitman
69 Bump off
70 __ of Scilly
71 Follow orders

DOWN
1 Type size
2 Saudi or Syrian, e.g.
3 Sole
4 Terminate
5 More strange
6 Gossipy
7 Feverish
8 Mournful writers
9 Observe again
10 Office holders
11 Harrow rival
12 Needle case
13 Setback
18 Islamic scholars
23 Unpublished writings: abbr.
24 11/6/01
25 Encourage
26 Low-cut shoes
27 Kind of drum
28 Biographer of FDR
31 Dadaist Max
32 Errand boy
33 Lyric poem
35 Snoop
37 __ culpa
41 Oxygen supplying devices
46 Midler of "Beaches"
48 Sleeve card
50 Reproductive cell
53 Poetic postscript
54 Encourages
55 Building wings
56 Meg Ryan film, "You've Got __"
57 Cookery expert Rombauer
59 Wild attempt
60 Soccer player of note
61 Bohemian
64 Russian chess master
65 A pair

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

B	E	T	A		M	A	N	I	C		S	T	E	P
A	M	O	S		A	R	E	N	A		T	A	T	E
S	M	O	K	E	S	T	A	C	K		E	R	T	E
S	A	T		C	O	I	L		E	R	A	S	E	R
			B	O	N	E		S	W	A	M			
S	P	O	O	L	S		S	H	A	M	R	O	C	K
E	E	R	I	E		G	O	A	L		O	M	E	N
E	T	A	L		B	L	I	N	K		L	E	S	E
R	I	T	E		R	I	L	E		A	L	G	A	E
S	T	E	R	O	I	D	S		S	M	E	A	R	S
			M	A	C	E		S	T	A	R			
S	T	M	A	R	K		B	O	A	S		D	E	E
E	R	I	K		B	R	O	W	N	S	T	U	D	Y
L	U	R	E		A	I	R	E	D		A	N	N	E
L	E	A	R		T	O	A	D	S		P	E	A	S

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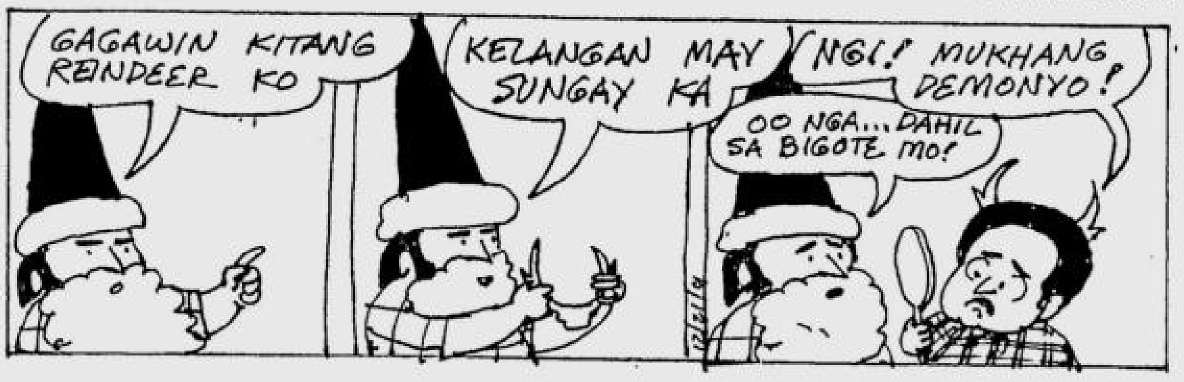
11/6/01

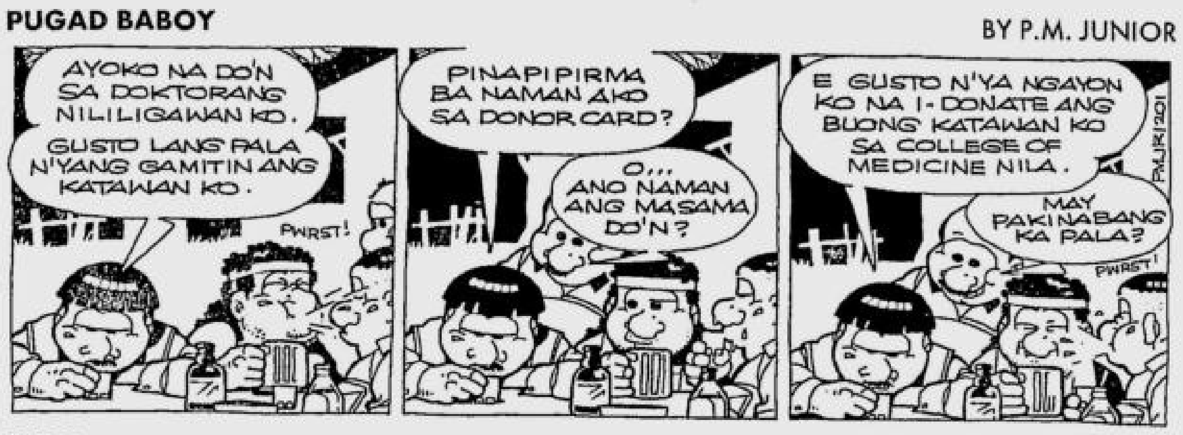
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


GAGAWIN KITANG REINDEER KO
KELANGAN MAY SUNGAY KA
NGI! MUKHANG DEMONYO!
OO NGA... DAHIL SA BIGOTE MO!

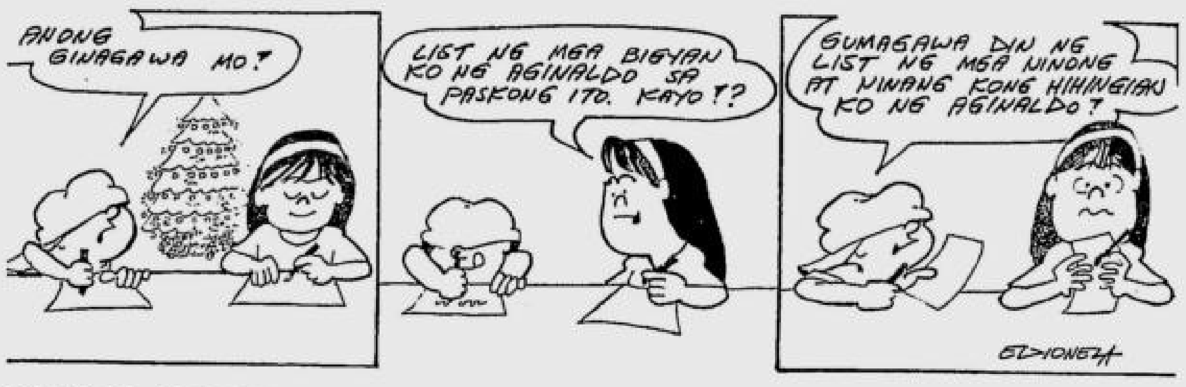
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


AYOKO NA DO'N SA DOKTORANG NILILIGAWAN KO.
GUSTO LANG PALA N'YANG GAMITIN ANG KATAWAN KO.
PWRST!
PINAPIPIRMA BA NAMAN AKO SA DONOR CARD?
O... ANO NAMAN ANG MASAMA DO'N?
E GUSTO N'YA NGAYON KO NA I-DONATE ANG BUONG KATAWAN KO SA COLLEGE OF MEDICINE NILA.
MAY PAKINABANG KA PALA?
PWRST!
PMJR1201

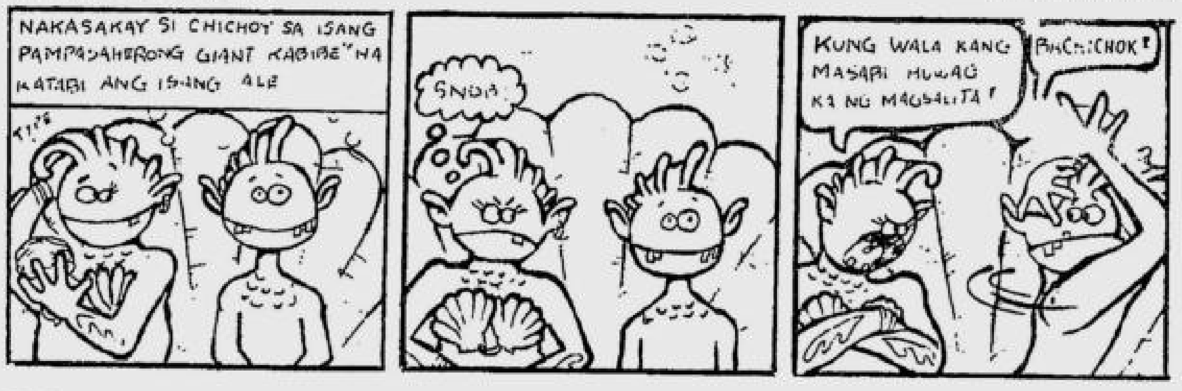
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


ANONG GINAGAWA MO?
LIST NG MGA BIBIGYAN KO NG AGINALDO SA PASKONG ITO. KAYO?
GUMAGAWA DIN NG LIST NG MGA NINONG AT NINANG KONG HIHINGIAN KO NG AGINALDO?
EDIONELA

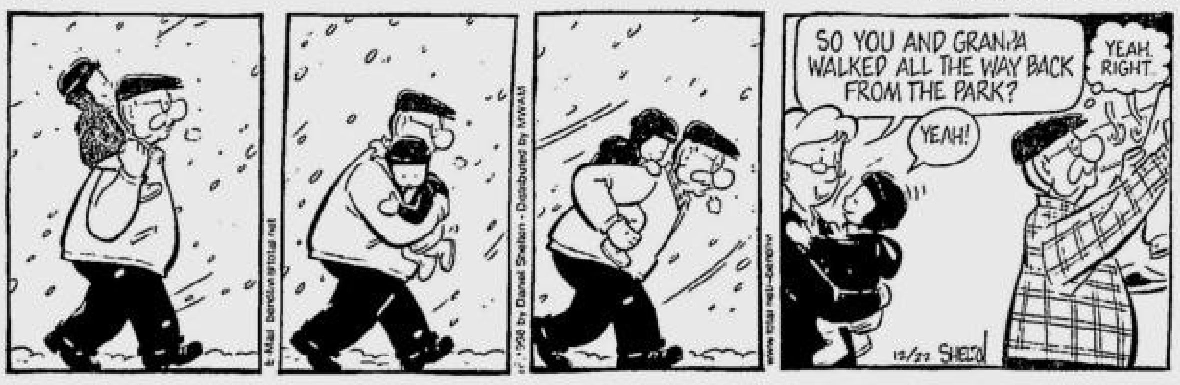
CHICHOY CHOKOY

BY IKOY RICIO


NAKASAKAY SI CHICHOY SA ISANG PAMPASAHERONG GIANT KABIBE NA KATABI ANG ISANG ALE
SNOB
KUNG WALA KANG MASABI HUWAG KA NG MAGSALITA!
BHCHICHOK!

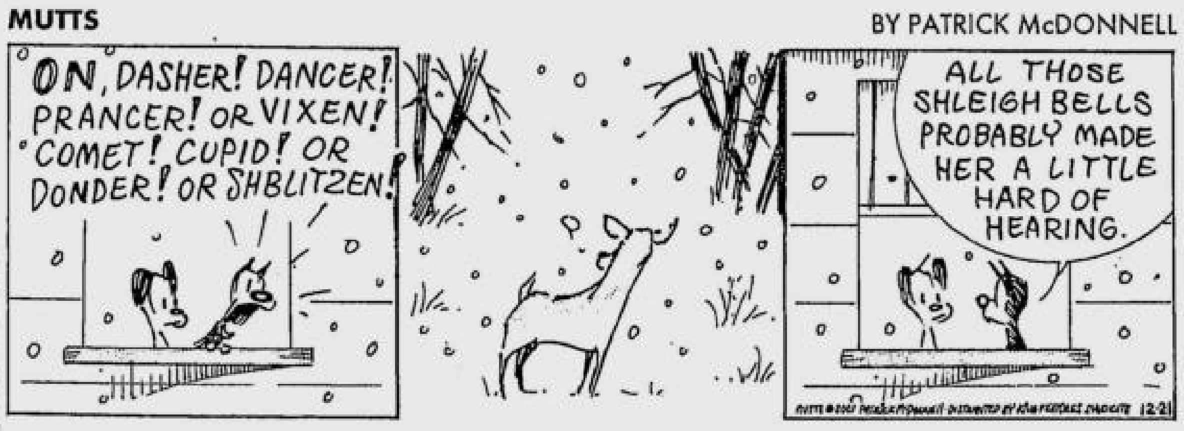
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


SO YOU AND GRANMA WALKED ALL THE WAY BACK FROM THE PARK?
YEAH!
YEAH. RIGHT.
12/22 SHELTON

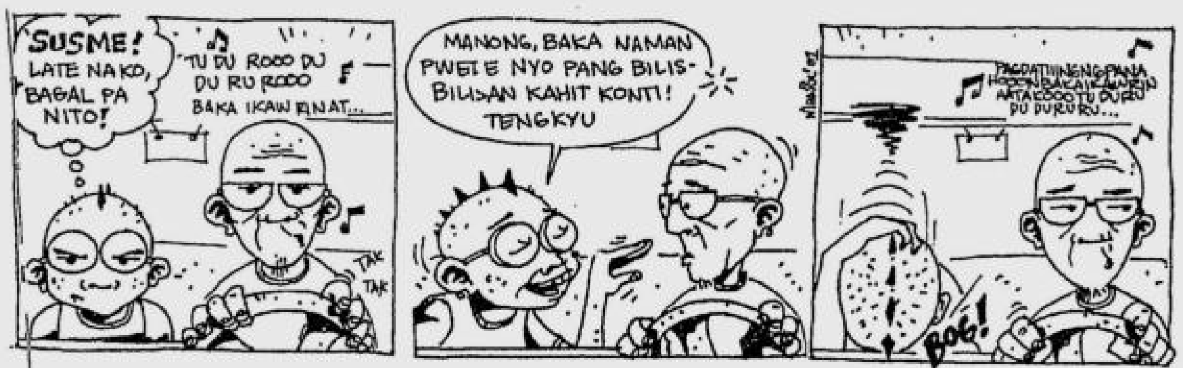
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


ON, DASHER! DANCER! PRANCER! OR VIXEN! COMET! CUPID! OR DONDER! OR SHBLITZEN!
ALL THOSE SHLEIGH BELLS PROBABLY MADE HER A LITTLE HARD OF HEARING.
12-21

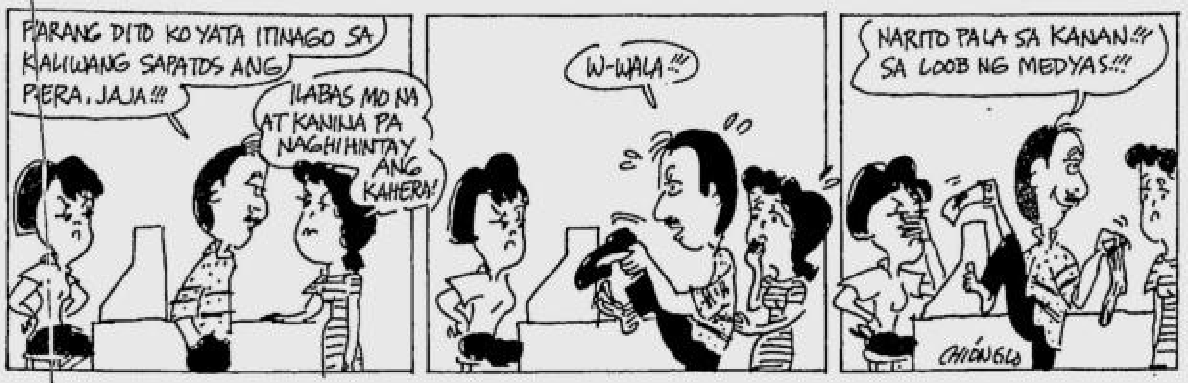
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


SUSME! LATE NA KO, BAGAL PA NITO!
TU DU ROOO DU DU RU ROOO BAKA IKAW RINAT...
TAK TAK
MANONG, BAKA NAMAN PWEDE NYO PANG BILIS-BILISAN KAHIT KONTI! TENGKYU
DU DURURU...
BOG!

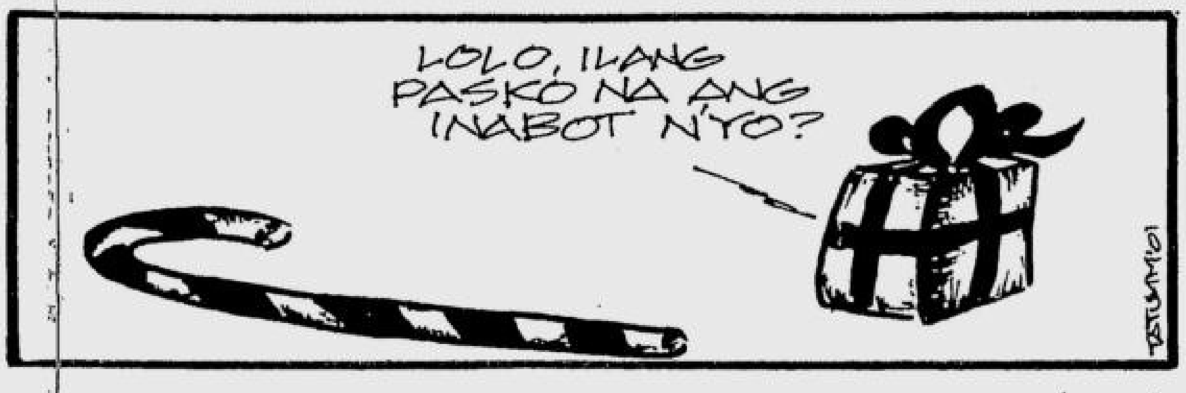
LOVEKNOTS

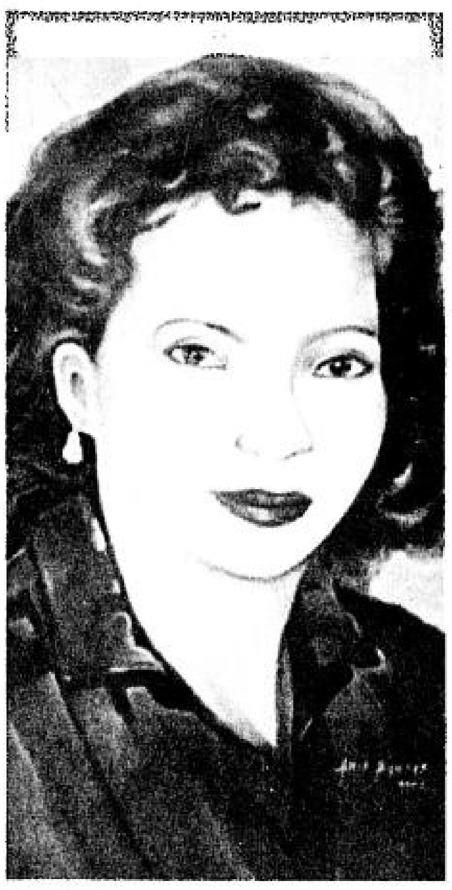
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PARANG DITO KO YATA ITINAGO SA KALIWANG SAPATOS ANG PERA. JAJA!!!
ILABAS MO NA AT KANINA PA NAGHIHINTAY ANG KAHERA!
W-WALA!!!
NARITO PALA SA KANAN!!! SA LOOB NG MEDYAS!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

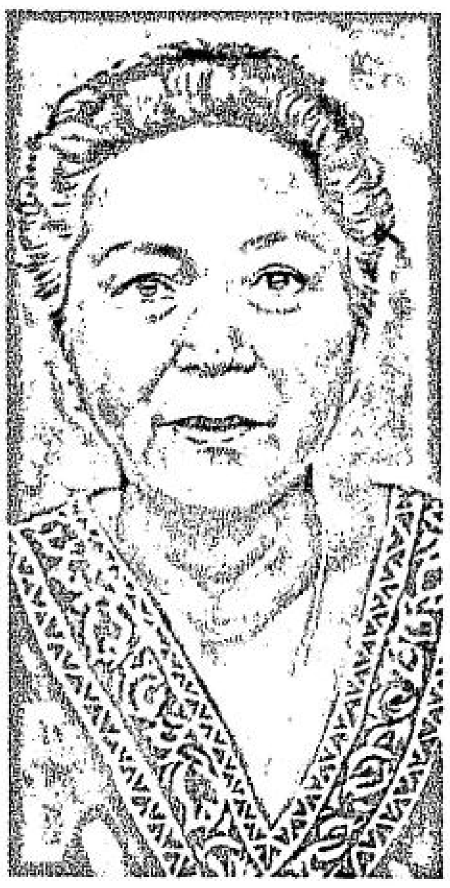
BY PAPU & TATUM MILAMBILING


LOLO, ILANG PASKO NA ANG INABOT N'YO?
TATUM'01

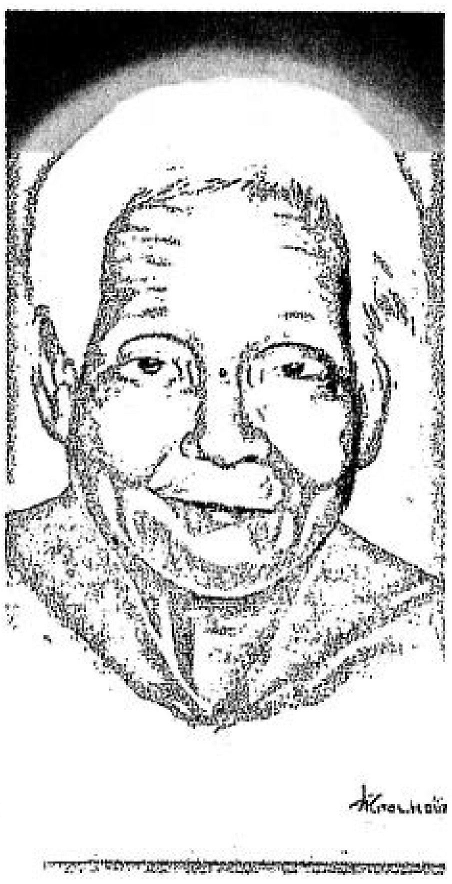


BEATRICE "Charley" Barretto

VIOLETA Arida



JESUSA Concha



SILVINA Laya

Women green warriors honored in book

First of two parts

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda

WHEN Joy Buensalido and Abe Florendo were making a list of 100 women achievers for their book, "100 Women of the Philippines," we suggested a few names. One of them was that of Leonarda Navato Camacho, recognized as a strong advocate of zero waste, recycling and composting as effective ways to manage the country's, especially Metro Manila's, garbage problems. We did not know that, without fanfare, Camacho had made a list of a similar breed of women, and published this in her own book, "100 Taon: 100 Filipina Sa Digmaan at Sa Kapayapaan (100 Years: 100 Women in War and in Peace)."

The Buensalido-Florendo lineup is made up of women from diverse professions and occupations still in our midst. Camacho, on the other hand, writing in Tagalog, concentrated mainly on women during the revolutionary wars and World War II, as well as those who distinguished themselves as civic leaders, educators, artists, scientists and environmentalists.

A dedicated civic leader herself, particularly in the field of the environment, Camacho speaks her mind often on the subject of proper waste management. Her book is an eye-opener because it features women who have made use of nature in positive, useful ways, and long before environmentalism became the strong movement and the household word that it is today. In Camacho's list of 100, there are 10 environmentalists, seven of them still doing their thing.

There is Violeta Arida who has devoted her life to researching, writing and inventing things from nature to make life easier, always keeping in mind that while man can use nature for his purpose, he needs to conserve it, too. Her inventions include transparent soap; diesel fuel substitute from coconut oil; use of coconut oil in the production of sulfated and monoglyceride detergent; use of palm kernel oil in the production of triglyceride; use of water lily for fuel pellet production; use of banaba leaves for antidiabetic drugs; and fertilizer from rice husks and limestone.

A million trees

Beatrice "Charley" Barretto set up the Science of Mind and Man Center a few years ago, which taught the art of living healthily and in harmony with the environment. Most of all, she is known as the Filipino who planted a million trees all over the country from 1985-1995 in a reforestation project.

Many Filipino women focused on plants and herbs in their study of alternative medicine. Among them is Jesusa Concha, a pharmacist, biochemist and researcher on medicinal plants in the Philippines. She identified a whole list of these plants and Luz Oliveros Belardo, a pharmaceutical chemist, is noted as the Filipina who extracted oil from the *apitong* as substitute for diesel oil. It is now said, in view of her findings, that if past governments had planted plenty of *apitong* and *pili* trees, the Philippines would now have its own oil for its transportation needs.

Silvina Laya is called "Mother of Medicinal Plants in the Philippines." Years before the law encouraging use of medicinal plants was passed, Laya had already set up herbal gardens in public schools around the country. She also established Paglingap Schools (or Caring Schools) in far-flung rural areas which had dormitories for students who lived far from the school.

Next: More researches on fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants

Storage problems find solutions

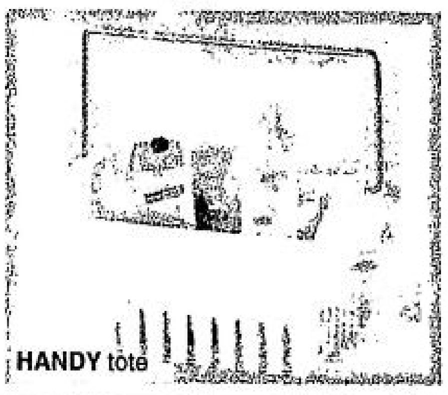
MAKEROOM is a new brand of specialty retailing that provides fully functional, innovative and fun storage solutions.

The newest offering from the country's leading lifestyle provider, Stores Specialists Inc., MakeRoom is not just about making space; it's about making sensible space.

Conceptualized by the people behind Stores Specialists Inc., which brought to the Philippines such names as Salvatore Ferragamo, Lacoste, DKNY, Beauty Bar, Lush and other well-known international labels, MakeRoom has storage solutions for kitchen, bath and even office. The high quality goods of plastic, metal, wood or vacuum packs for traveling are sourced from different countries and guarantee to keep stuff neatly compressed, tucked and safe. MakeRoom also comes in exquisite contemporary designs that would appeal to any taste and style and very attractive prices.

It is located at Lifestyles, 2/L PowerPlant Mall in Rockwell, Makati City.

ROLYKIT



HANDY tote

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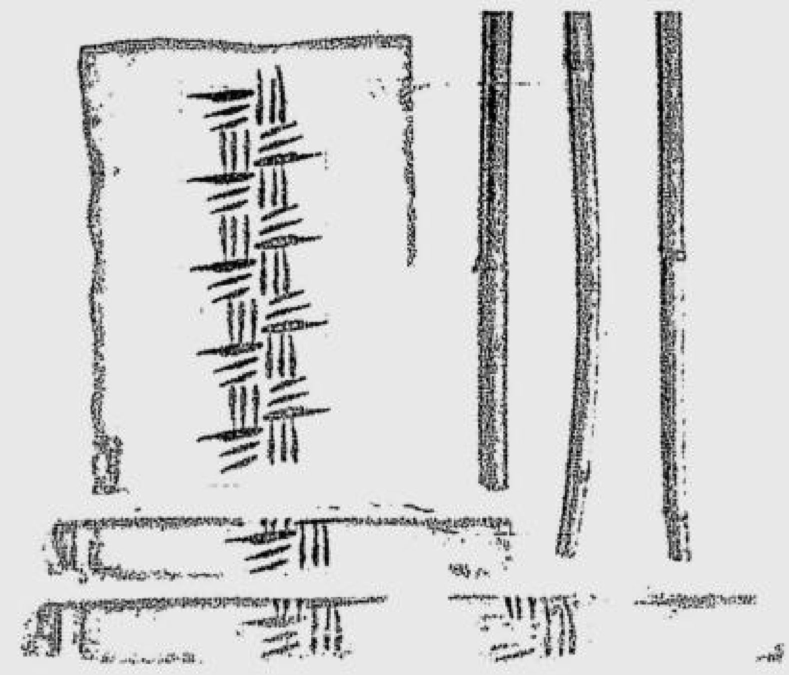
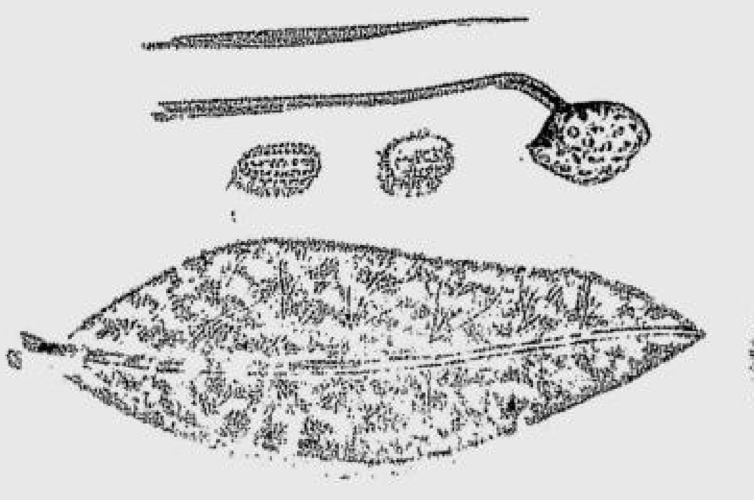
The Palm Card is valid for 6 months from date of purchase for take-out and delivery.

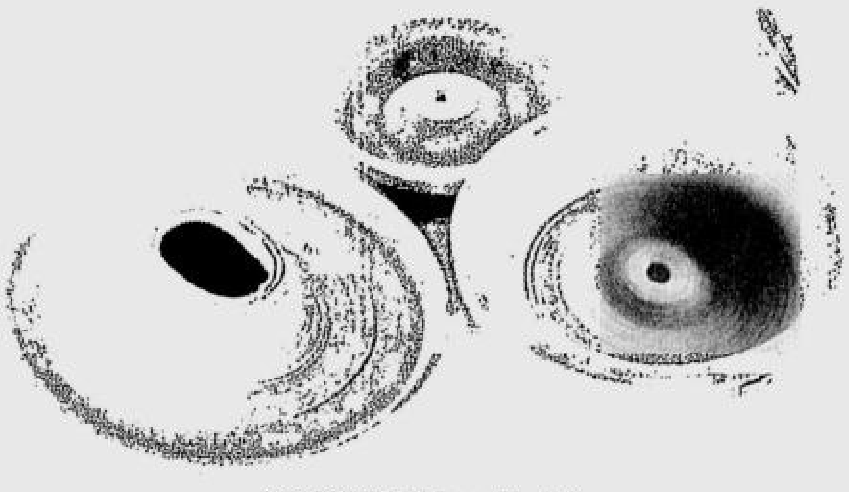
Per DTI NCR Permit No. 4254, Series of 2001



BAMBOO leaves are the dominant theme in this assembly of accents by Christian Tortu from Paris.

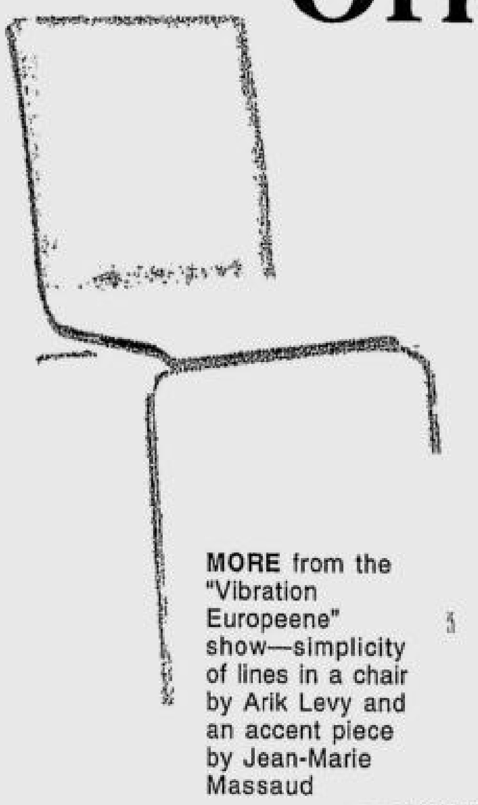


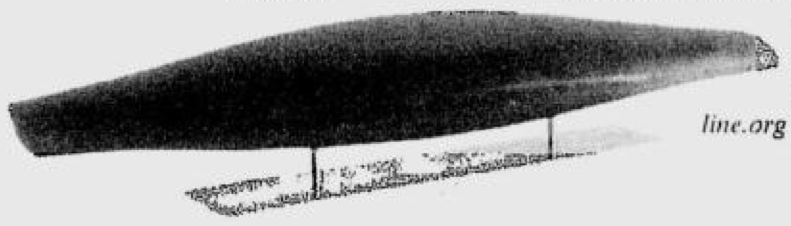
"PLAT Peuille en Porcelaine" is Tortu's take on functional pieces for dining and living sets. It is a silent symphony of undisturbed patterns imprinted on a sturdy piece to be used as visual adornment or a functional item on a dining tapestry.



LEMONGRAS from Munich comes out with graceful handmade pottery.

Orientalia dominates





MORE from the "Vibration Europeene" show—simplicity of lines in a chair by Arik Levy and an accent piece by Jean-Marie Massaud

(From page F1)

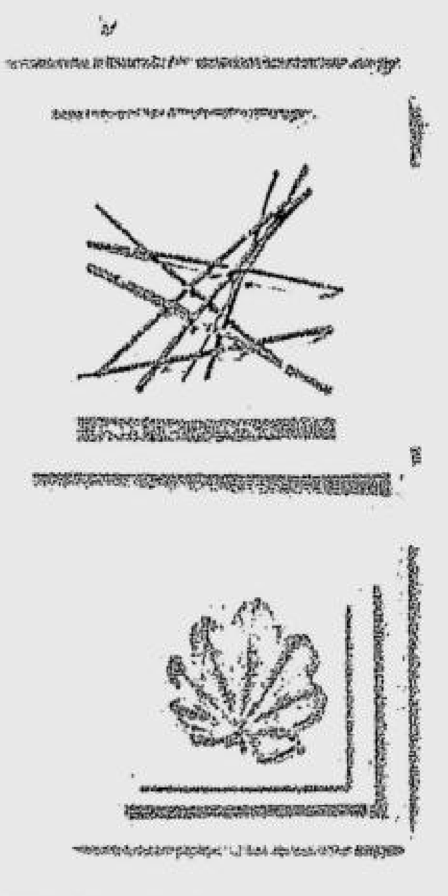
tions are pristine. Thus, we welcome fine dining pieces that echo Zendo traditions or simple shapes that are not gilded or overly painted. Rather, the delicate and fragile details of a leaf are found on a plate and the natural non-uniform color blending of pottery becomes part of a bowl's glazed beauty.

Figures that have long been associated with the tropical, Asian graciousness are now merging with dimensions of brushed stainless steel. A Chinese elmwood, huangwali or narra table is now a lovely host to a tapestry of home accessories in functional and stylish Philippe Starck designs. Similarly, organic, bamboo-inspired tableware becomes wonderfully placed on a table by Antonio Citterio.

Where comfort and enjoyment are found in living environments, designers find a sense of satisfaction, enabling the circle of influences to keep going around, purified, tested and sifted.

The mingling of thoughts, forms and traditions makes us realize that the world is getting smaller, more receptive to different cultures. The world of design has made the global village become more interesting–truly a symphony of races.

E-mail the author at cnolido@aimonline.org



A SET of three leaf plates is a joy on a dining table, showing the distinctive influences of different Asian traditions.

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-Eilene Montemayor

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See fireworks light up the night sky.

Fireworks shows at Ayala Center Makati every Friday at 8 pm and every Saturday and Sunday at 7 pm until December 22 at the Glorietta 4 Park. At the Alabang Town Center, it's on every Saturday and Sunday at 7 pm until Dec. 30 at the Town Plaza. At the Ayala Center Cebu, see the lights at 8 pm on Dec. 16 and 23 in the lagoon area.

EXTENDED MALL HOURS:

Ayala Center Makati
Dec. 14-22 (10 am to 10 pm)
Dec. 23 (10 am to 12 mn)

Alabang Town Center
Dec. 14-22 (11 am to 9 pm weekdays/10 am to 10 pm weekends)
Dec. 23 (10 am to 12 mn)

Ayala Center Cebu
Dec. 19-21 (10 am to 9 pm)
Dec. 22-23 (10 am to 10 pm)

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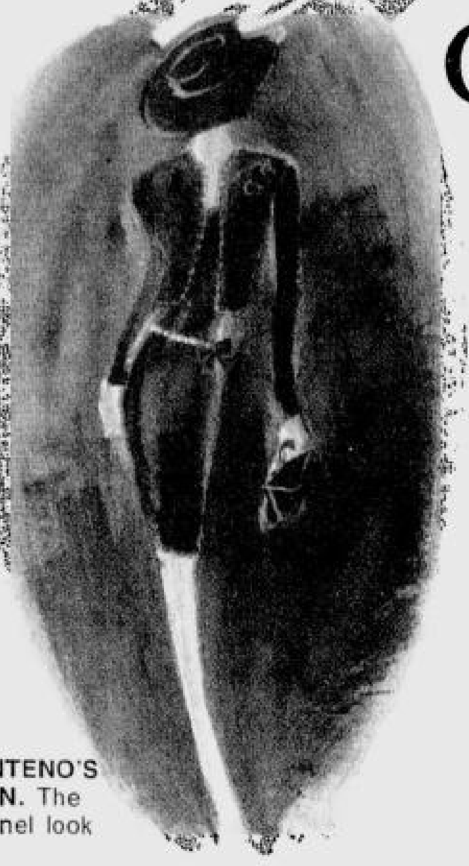
Trend Spotting LIFESTYLE

Gregg-style shorthand

Gregg Centeno's designs can be very severe or filled with froufrou



CENTENO'S ICON. The Chanel look

PHOTOS BY RAYMOND LAUCHENGCO
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMES REYES

GREGORY Centeno may not be a trendsetter. But he has provided functional and fashionable clothes for the well-to-do but working client.

Designing came naturally to Centeno. When he was in high school and college in Ilocos Sur, he would fill up his notebook with sketches and doodles.

In 1975, he migrated to Manila. His aunt, who was studying in an exclusive school, introduced him to her circle. Centeno set up shop on Araneta Avenue. QC that attracted the *colegialas*. He learned construction by experience. He worked by draping the material directly onto the client, drawing the folds together to highlight the wearer's assets.

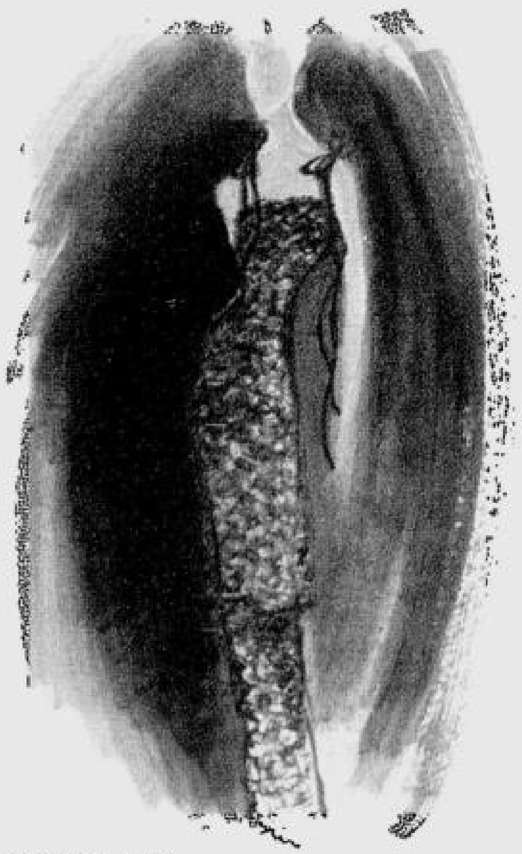
"You had to fit, cut and baste on the body of the customer. Others used the muslin pattern (known as *toile*). The younger designers never experienced cutting on the body," says Centeno.

Eventually Centeno was accepted by other fashion designers.

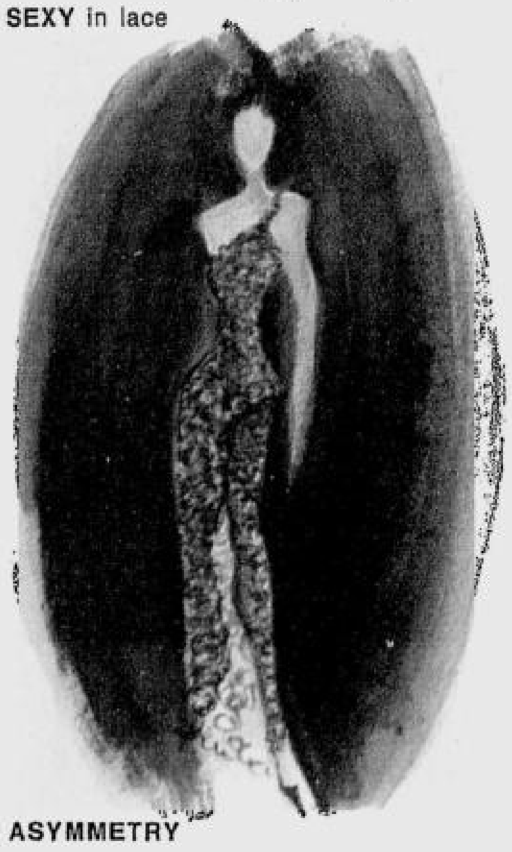
"*Kahit na baguhan ako, hindi ako napadpad sa mga pariwarang tao,*" he says.

Centeno wanted to prove his mettle. So he joined lunchtime fashion shows which were popular in the '70s. Like most designers, he went the fashion circuit that consisted of shows at the

GREGG/p.G4



SEXY in lace



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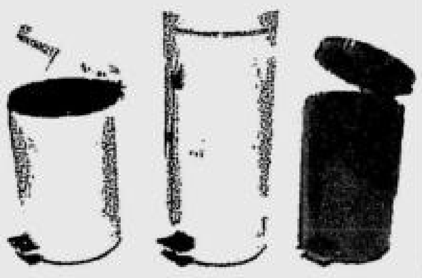
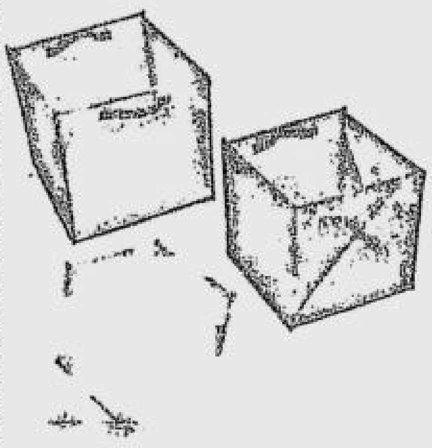
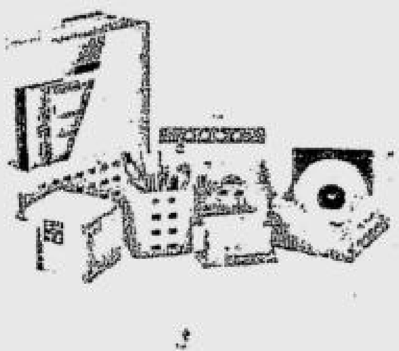

Step-On Waste Can

Cobalt Bottles

Garment Rack


Magic Boxes

Rolykit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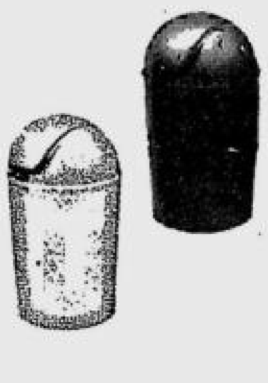
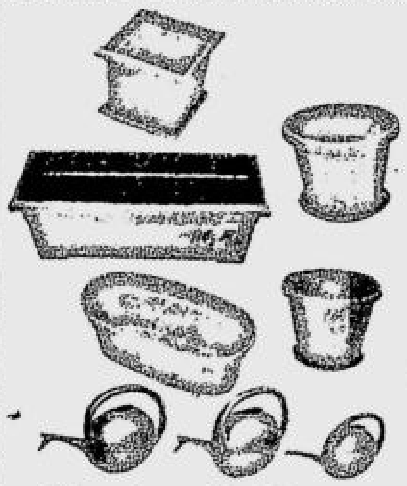
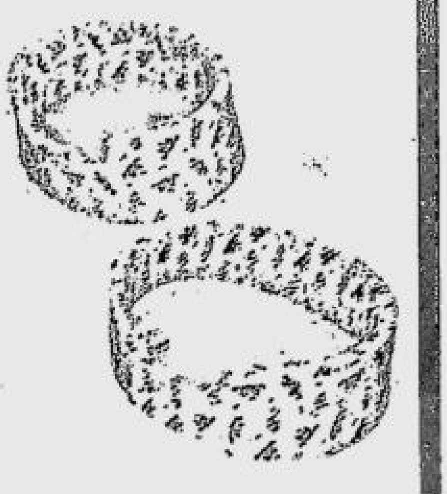
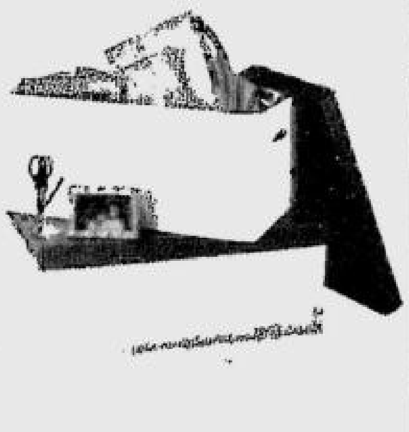

Swing Bin Waste Can


Flower Boxes / Oval Planters and Watering Cans

Tote 'n Go


Dog Beds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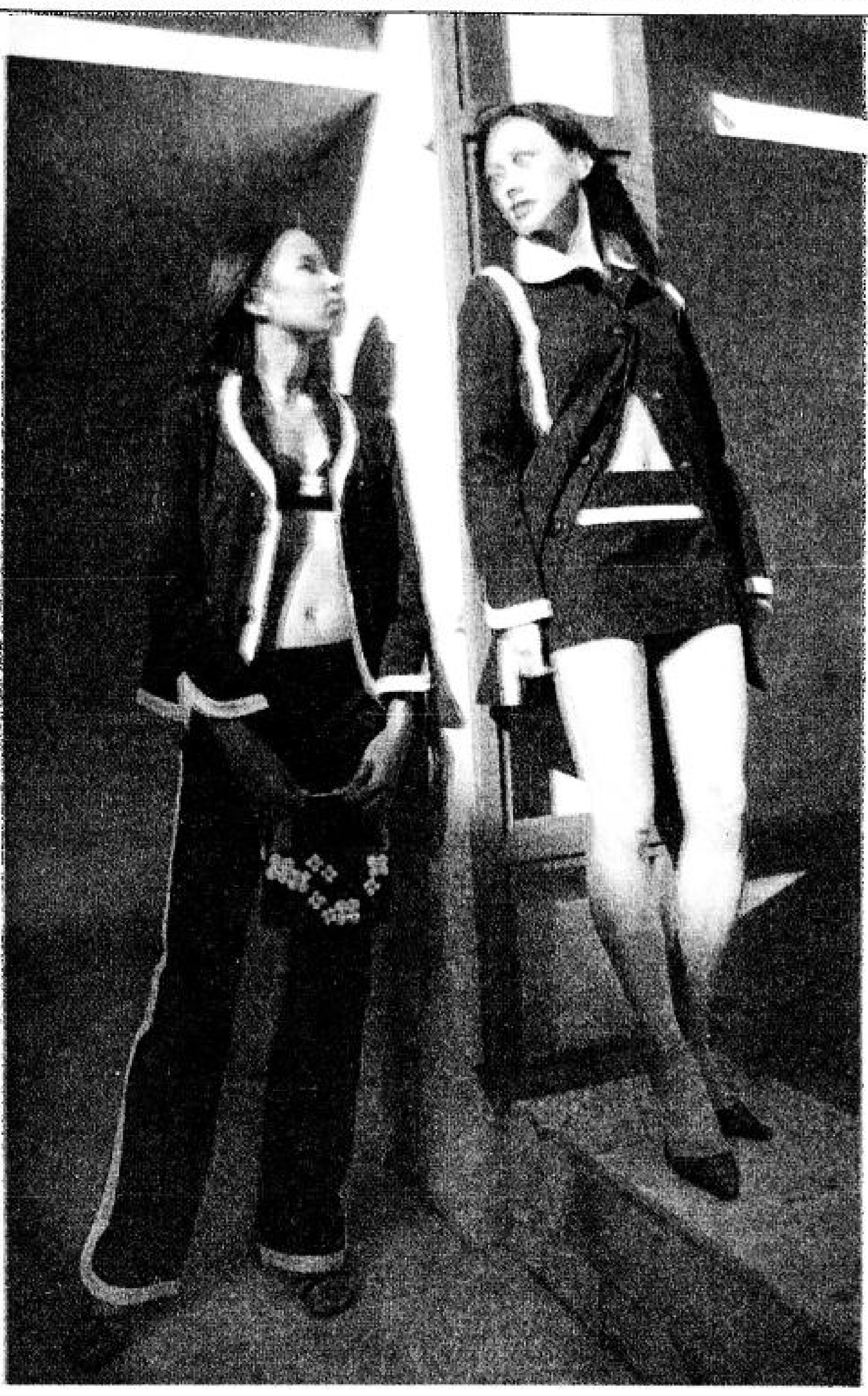
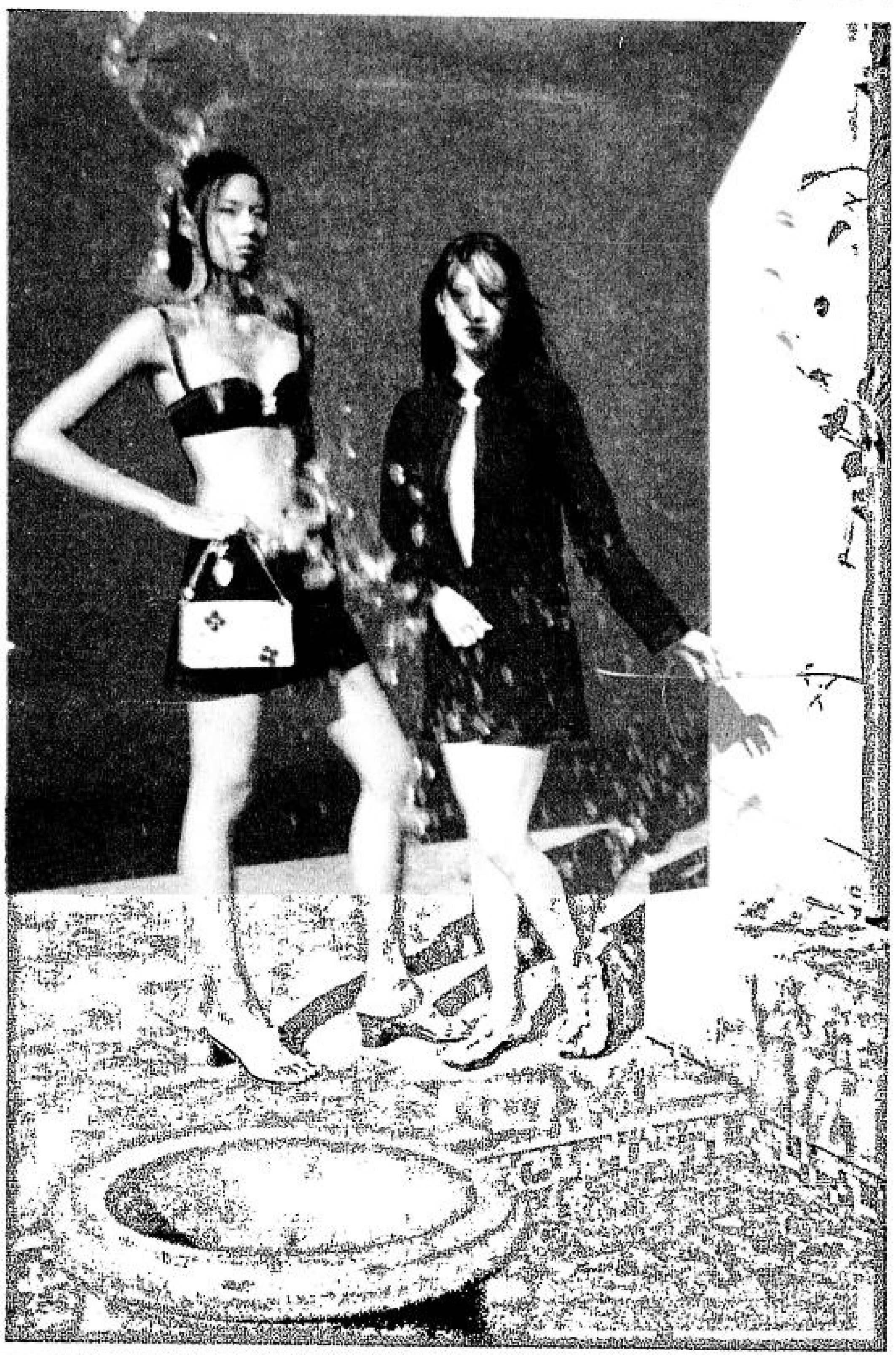


VARIATIONS of the black-and-white geometric look

The resort line of Louis Vuitton sticks to basic black and white with flower motifs and appliqués



MARJAY wears a sexy bandeau top and mini, while Bea is in a tunic, all accented with the camilla.

Resort vogue

PHOTOS BY WAHOO GUERRERO

BETWEEN THE WINTER cum festive holiday fashion and the summer wear is the resort or cruise collection. It's a look that's designed for the affluent society or those with disposable income—people who can hie off to the tropics or the beach to escape the cold season.

There are choices for the lady such as retro elegance, the safari look with a sexy attitude and the insouciant simplicity with delicate decorative details.

Louis Vuitton's Cruise collection chose the basic black-and-white harmony with spates of soft yellow, lavender, orange, periwinkle and lilac. The silhouettes are tailored, the tops are revealing, the skirts are super-tight in A-line styles. The pants graze at the ankles. To contrast with the bias trimmings are such details as flower motifs and appliqués.

FLORAL motifs in accessories will be a strong trend in 2002.

LUSCIOUS orange contrasts with the blackness and sheerness of this top.

OUR link with nature is the trend for 2002. Think banana yellow like this suit.

MODELS: ESAC-SUPERMODEL 2001 MARJAY RAMIREZ, BEA VALDES
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY JOJO ARJONA AND LOURD RYAN RAMOS OF EMPHASIS SALON
MAKEUP: CLARINS
CLOTHES AND ACCESSORIES: LOUIS VUITTON'S CRUISE COLLECTION
LOCATION: ROCKWELL CLUB

My favorite bag

"**A MAROON** Jansport backpack, which is so comfortable and sporty. It can carry all my stuff."—**Isa, 18, student**

"**MY** new black, square shoulder bag that I bought from SM. It looks classy, yet it's affordable."—**Pao, 20, student**

By Nikki M. Meru

IF you think that only diamonds can be a woman's best friend, think again.

A woman and her bag are inseparable. It is an extension of herself. Who does she run to when she needs a little retouching, or when she simply wants to fish out some trinkets? It's her ever reliable bag. Through these admirable pieces, be they designer brands or nondescript but stylish ones from bazaars, the woman expresses her individuality and exhibits her sense of style.

Undeniably, bags are a must-have for every woman. It is her refuge in troubled times. In this century when everything is going extravagant, it is surprising to find most women becoming more and more practical in choosing their bags. They go for comfort but they would never compromise their flair for fashion.

Now, ladies, Inquirer asks you: What is your favorite bag?

"My favorite is a black Marks and Spencer leather backpack that was given to me by my best friend. Like her, I can count on it anytime. It goes well with my wardrobe."—**Myra, 31, executive assistant**

"My lavender Jansport backpack because it's very comfy and has unlimited space for clothes, books and other things that I might need for the day."—**Christina, 18, student**

"A black rectangular body bag with brown leather strap. It's handy, fashionable and can carry all my essentials."—**Claire, 30, policy researcher**

"My favorite is my black leather attaché case. With it I can carry my office stuff and still look chic and uncluttered."—**Yoly, 40, lawyer**

"My navy blue backpack because it makes it easier for me to carry all the things that I need for the day."—**Abby, 19, student**

"My black medium-sized shoulder bag. It can carry all my belongings."—**Lourdes, 23, front desk officer**

"Brown wool shoulder bag with purple strap and flowery design. Its style is in between sleek and sporty, the size is just right, it can carry all my *kikay* stuff."—**Yehyeh, 19, student**

"My favorite is a blue mesh bag. I love the color, it suits my uniform well. It's convenient to bring around and it's affordable."—**Missy, 18, student**

"This purple shoulder bag that I bought from a bazaar three years ago. It's very durable. Equipped with pockets, I can easily bring around whatever trinkets I have."—**Kitkat, 19, student**

"A black leather bag that was given to me as a gift. It suits my taste."—**Abet, 43, psychologist**

"A black Esprit leather bag because I can put in it a lot of things."—**Aizel, 26, guidance counselor**

"A genuine leather, black handbag. It's very elegant and classy."—**Cecille, 46, real estate broker**

"**A RECTANGULAR,** denim shoulder bag that I got in Hong Kong. It's cool, sporty and everybody likes it."—**Rachel, 18, student**

"**A BLACK** Kate Spade bag that was given to me by my Dad because it can fit everything I need for the day."—**Mia, 32, professor**

"**A ROUND-BASED** Prada handbag that was a gift from my Mom. I like the style, it can be used with any outfit and its size is just right."—**Mellany, 23, receptionist**

Women explain why can't the do without their favorite totes

"**A SMALL** black shoulder bag with a short strap that I got as a *pasalubong* from my Mom when she went to Hong Kong. It's perfect for me."—**Tess, 34, professor**

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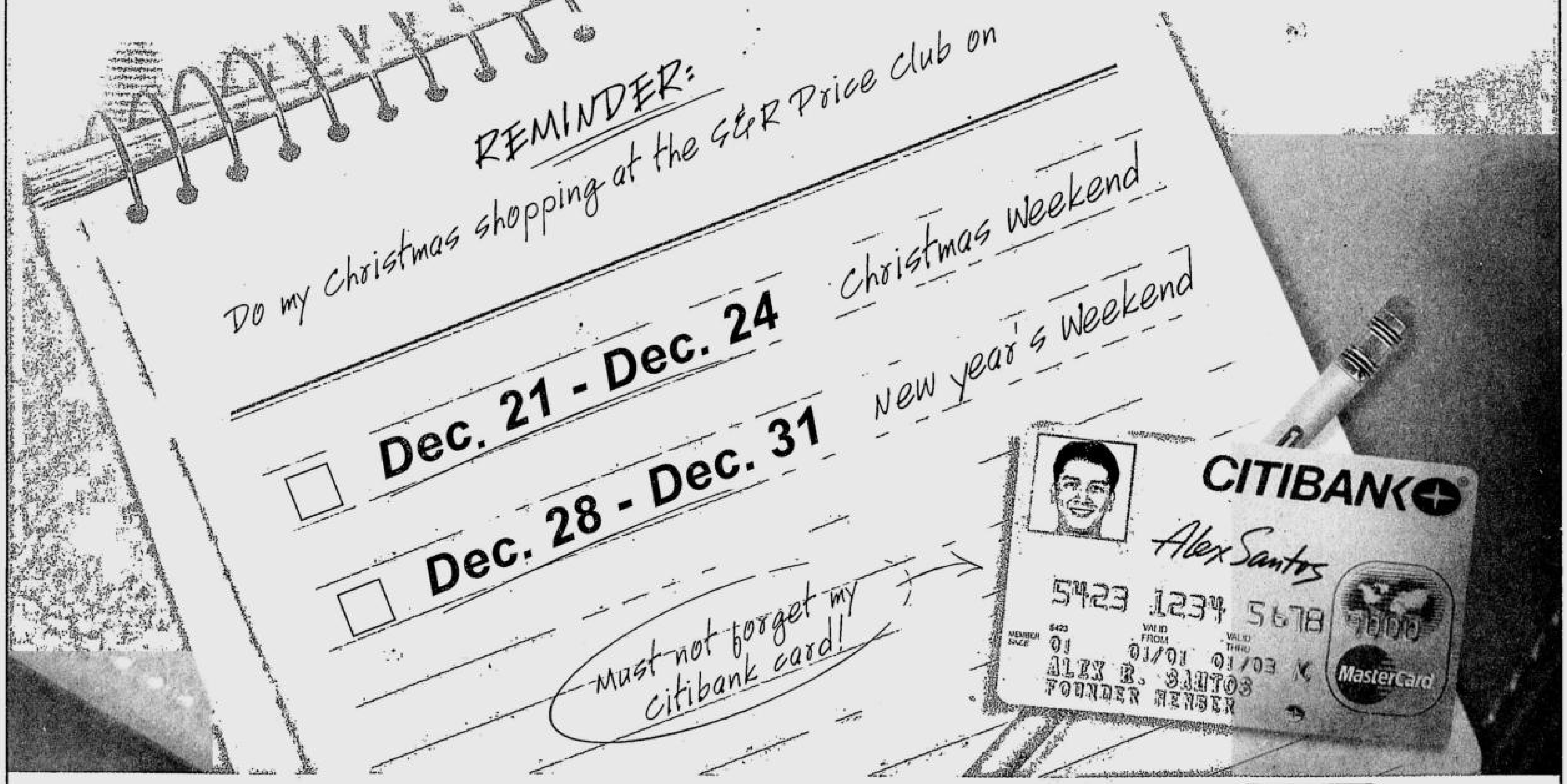

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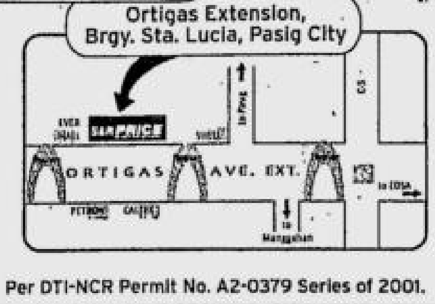

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CITIBANK

REVIVING the see-through of the '70s with the millennial fishtail

SHE'S in chantilly lace blouse and pants with faux fur stole, and he's in stretch jersey outfit.

Gregg-style shorthand

Without fanfare, Centeno has continued to make fashionable and functional clothes for a faithful clientele, women and men alike

(From page G1)

Philippine Village Hotel, Silahis, Hyatt and the Top of the Hilton.

Centeno started to specialize in tailoring when he moved to Malvar Street, Malate. Students from St. Paul's College brought their male friends who ordered coats and suits. When he opened the men's shop, Centeno became known for carefully constructed tailoring.

Today aside from men's tailoring, he continues to make dresses for women who like to appear feminine and elegant. His clientele includes the spouses of senators, wealthy Chinese, Gina de Venecia and Imee Marcos who at one time ordered a silk dupioni coatdress with leather piping.

Aside from Marcos, one of his adventurous clients is lawyer Felicitas Arroyo, for whom he made a suit with a standing, sculpted collar supported by wiring.

His evening gowns are embellished with re-embroidered lace that evoke patterns of worms. He can sew delicate Indian sari materials into a tailored cut. His designs can be very severe or filled with froufrou.

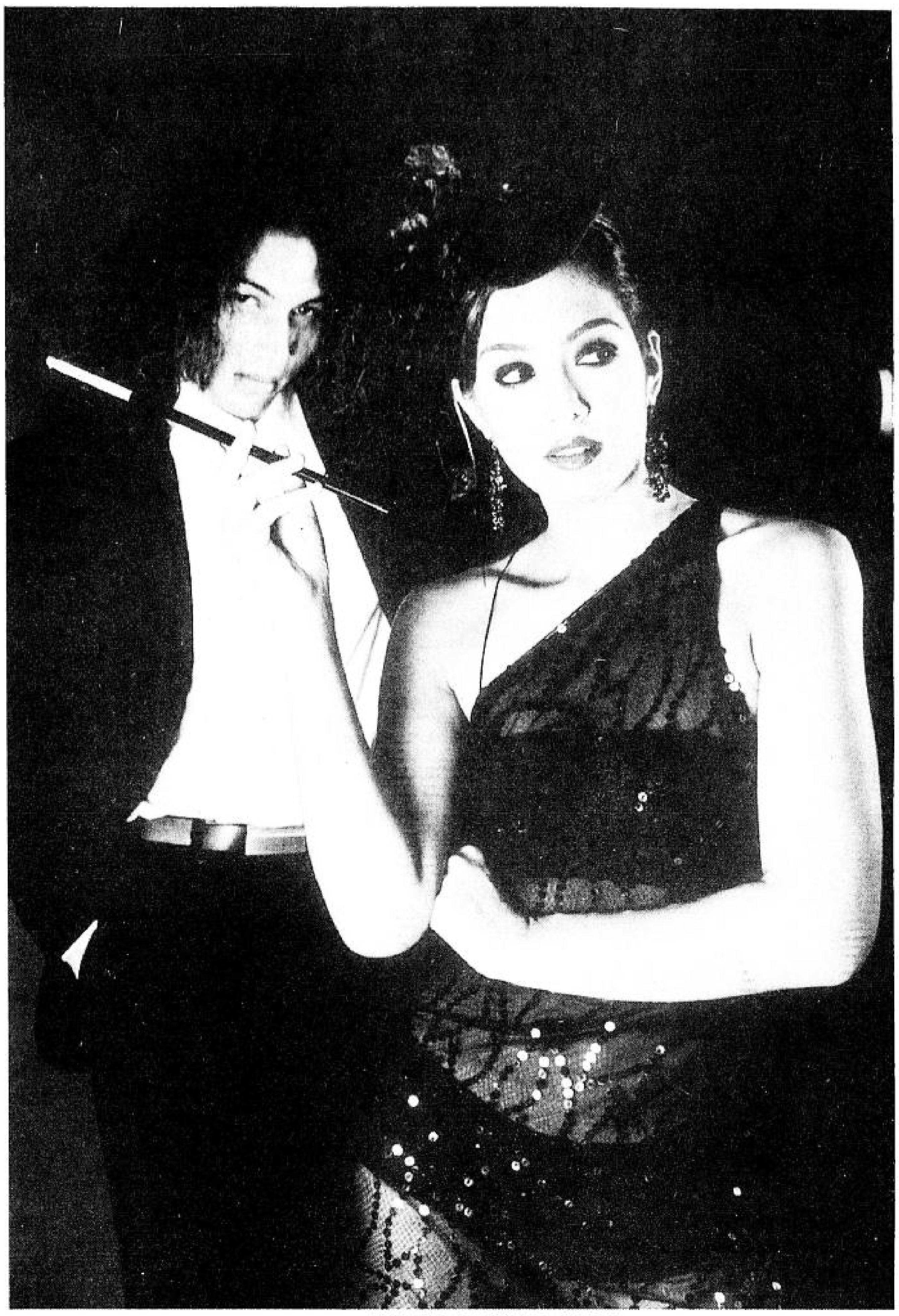
"I try to be different from everybody else. When it comes to beadwork, I create a three-dimensional effect," Centeno says.

Centeno also ventured into RTW. When he produced men's clothes for Mondragon's consortium, he became the top seller for his tees and easy-fit, button-down shirts.

On men's fashion, Centeno believes the look should be mannish not dandy.

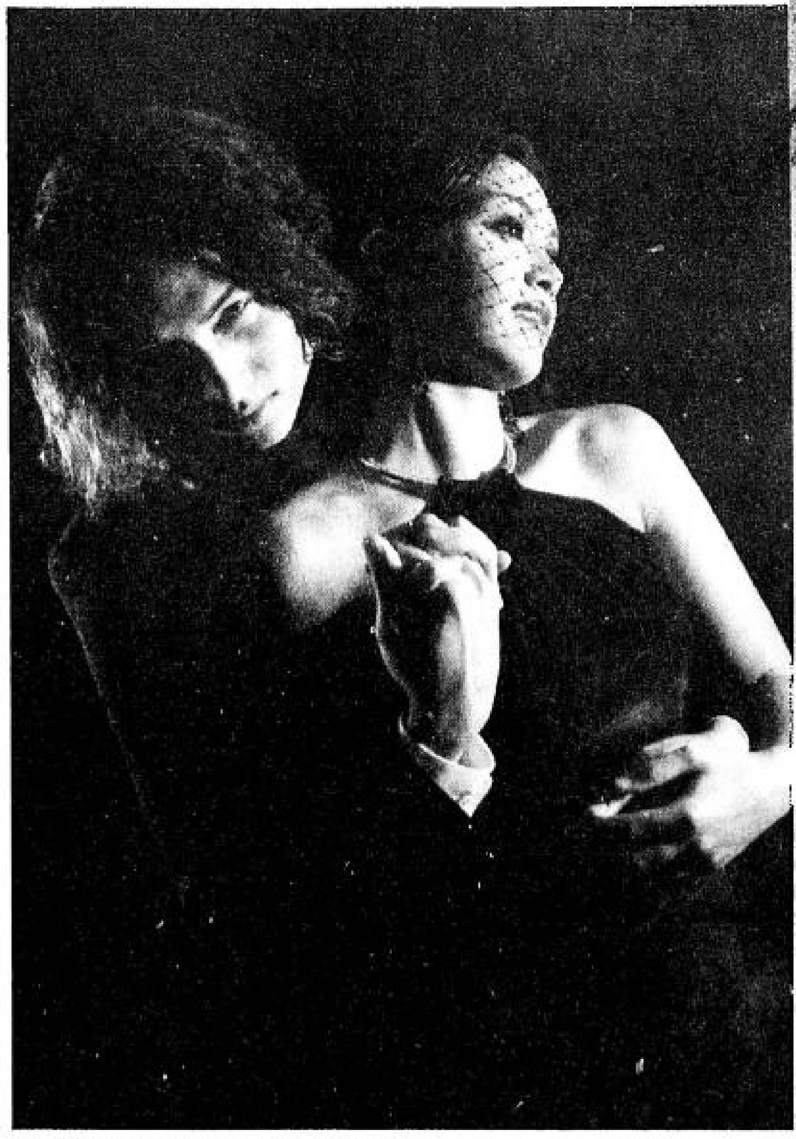
On the side he does landscapes and decorates. Centeno furnished a model unit in B.F. House. Developer Bobby Aguirre was impressed because the designer made the small unit look big by using light colors, maximizing the space, installing mirrors and scaled furniture to size.

Centeno just turned 50 but doesn't look his age. He derives aerobic activities from biking and walking around the Cultural Center of the Philippines complex. He also works out in the gym of his condo. Being an Ilokano, he favors vegetables and fruits and chucks in Coke for soya milk and organic fruits. *Marge C. Enriquez*

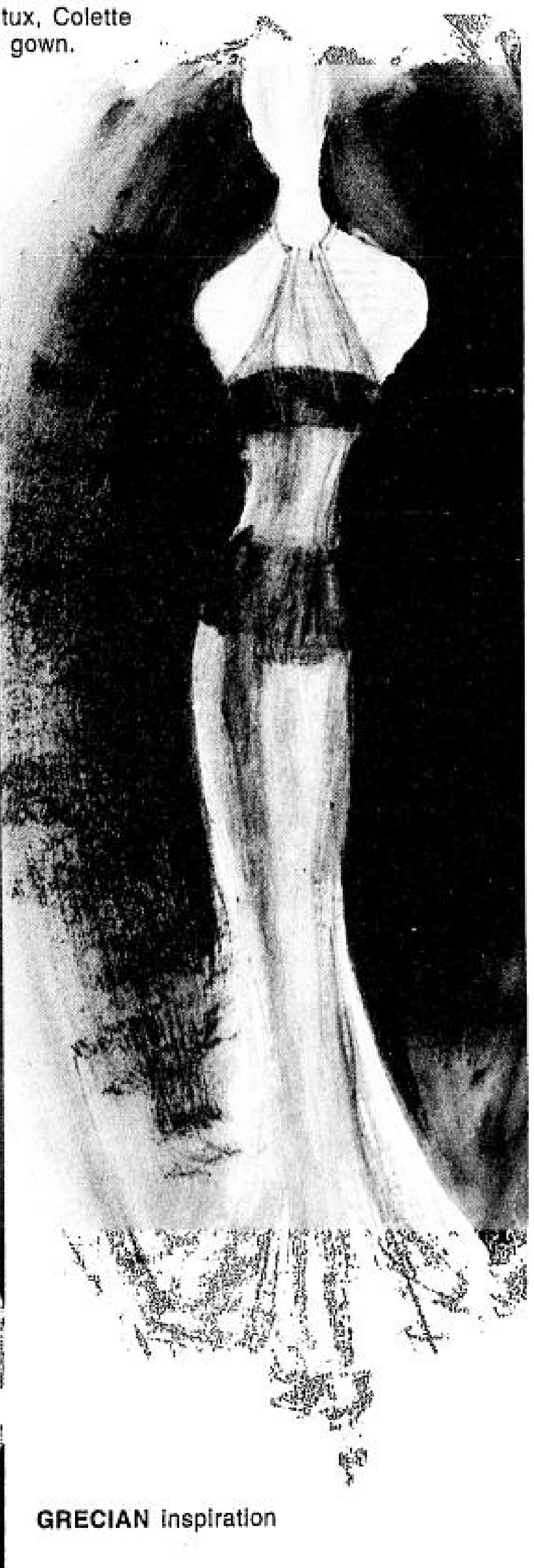


FOR THE BLACK-TIE AFFAIR. Raymund wears the tux, Colette wears a beaded tulle gown.

COLETTE wears a stretch tulle shirt with beadwork and sheer pants. Raymund wears a white jersey long-sleeved shirt.



BLACK is the color of seduction.



GRECIAN inspiration

MODELS:
COLETTE CENTENO AND RAYMUND MORENTE,
CAL CARRIE'S INTERNATIONAL
HAIR AND MAKEUP: ERIC MANINGAT

Open your hearts wider to the Spirit of Christmas

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CASUAL GLAM. Bianca Valerio uses this T-shirt as top. Very Tingting Cojuangco

DISCO DOLLY. Nafsika spotted during the cocktails

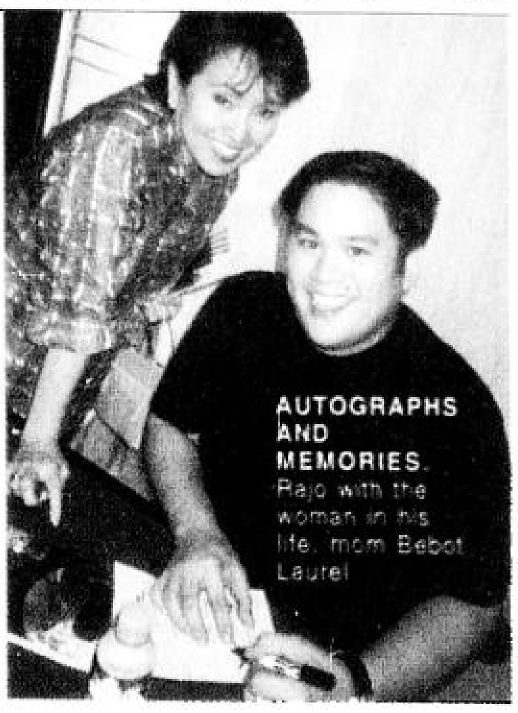
IMELDA NOW. Giant butterfly sleeves with denim jeans spell glam, glam, glam.

GOLDEN SARI. Tessa Prieto Valdés, fresh from India

BACK, LESS. Tippi Ocampo with her own creation of a tuxedo apron shirt

ATTEND the ball, then go clubbing with this Rajo ensemble.

MAD MUSE. Sarah Meier is our answer to Chloe Sevigny.


AUTOGRAPHS AND MEMORIES. Rajo with the woman in his life, mom Bebot Laurel

My love affair with Rajo

RUNWAY TO REALITY. Cal Carrie's Mich Astudillo with model mentor Joey Espino

DENIM AND LACE. Dianne Sison with Illac Diaz

DENIM EVERYWHERE. Anthony Polvorosa, Rosario Herrera and Sarah

EDGE MOVERS. Neil Lucente and Claudine Sia, captivating on and off camera

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY TIM YAP

IT'S not what you think.

But you know that feeling when you meet the person for the first time and this certain electricity hits you, like you've known this human being for a long time. It may be attraction, not merely physical. It may also be admiration for the achievements and aspirations the individual has set for himself and for others. Rajo Laurel, to quote Chris Lopez in her foreword to his "01" book, is indeed, "larger than life."

Rajo is many things to many people; he is adored and criticized, envied and loved. I've gotten to know the guy these past few years. I would visit (more like bug) him in his shop in-between clients to ask for style advice. I would text him (and Michele Sison) 20,000 times from New York or Paris or wherever to ask which pieces to purchase, you know in my usual fashion victim emergency mode. "The red Yohji or the gold Dolce?" "Where can I find those sneakers—at Colette or the flea market?" Stuff like that.

Frivolity aside, I've seen him in his most private and candid moments—while preparing for a show, the before and after of his fashion show reviews, hanging out with friends, singing along with "Rent" or "Sound of Music" with full choreography, even doing Pilita Corrales impersonations! Whatever he does, he is able to inject new life to his endeavors by giving them his 100 percent best—heart, soul, blood and balls.

"One of the great things about being a designer is that we can take liberties with our work. I love to experiment with a multitude of material to define and make a statement," Rajo always said.

Glorified notebook

It was no surprise for me to hear that he was launching his book. In special moments, he showed me his collection of sketchbooks, all neatly filed since this student of fashion started. The collection contained his ideas and inspirations—an intimate portrait of himself through his drawings. He would use his mathematics notebook and just daydream about "beautiful women drifting by, dressed in elegant gowns made of rich fabrics."

These sketchpads grew in number as he would do one each month, with a different theme and illustrated ideas. What he launched late last week at the lobby of the Allaince Française was a "glorified notebook—life breathed into his sketches."

I had told him before that I would want to be able to publish a series of designer-inspired illustration and picture books. It seems that he didn't wait for me anymore to be his publisher.

"As an avid collector of fashion journals and books, as well as photography and art volumes, it has been my ardent dream and wish to one day come up with my own. This book is that realization... a dream fulfilled and a wish granted," Rajo writes on the last pages of his book.

On his own, he gathered a team of the country's most respected photographers, stylists, makeup gurus and young designers to help him with the book. He gave copies of the book as a "thank you" gift to friends and followers that busy Friday night.

Wit and humor

I had seen the publication project before it went to press, but I was even more impressed upon seeing the actual product of symbiosis between Filipinos with world-class Filipinos—Neal Oshima, Jun de Leon, Yodel Pe, Ava Lugtu, Neil Lucente and Claudine Sia, Michael Salientes and, of course, Rajo.

Particularly memorable for me were Lucente and Sia's images of model 2Tay Maristela jumping with a background of countless eyes wide open. And who could miss that image, again of 2Tay, seemingly tripping, holding a bottle of Royal Tru-Orange that had its contents jumping out of the bottle? It was sheer couture-meets-pop wit and humor.

FAMILY TREE. Franco and Ayen Laurel with Venisse Laurel in a Rajo pink corset

Sarah Meier, model of the moment, exuded that Victorian-hippie-Old-World star of the silver screen in her photographs. Admirable how Rajo mentioned the name of young designer Paolo Raymundo—"I am a great fan of Paolo Raymundo's work, this modern renaissance man with his mohawk/mullet hair that was a lovely shade of green on the day of the shoot." Humility and a keen observant eye are truly things Rajo has learned while living and breathing in the fashion business.

FROM COFFEE TO COCKTAILS "It" girls Celine Lopez and Wendy Puyat

And the launch? It was relaxed, very casual and intimate—very different from the grand production that Rajo had been known for. Nothing contrived or overly choreographed. Yes, there was a video, but it was the video of his very controversial gala show. After a short parade of models, Rajo then positioned himself at the entrance booth where he signed copies of his book, which was given for free. "I realize that despite it all, I've still been blessed this year," he said in a very contemplative yet jolly mood.

From runway to reality

The models wore clothes from his latest collection, Victoriana pouf dresses and ball gowns. The difference was, this time, they didn't look overly made up and styled—in short, they showed how "wearable" really Rajo's collection was—no over-the-top accessories and hats or high hair.

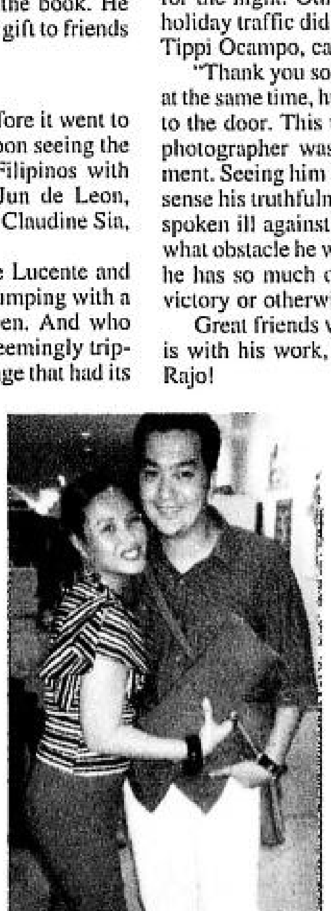
Bianca Valerio wore this patchwork ball skirt and fuchsia corset with a Levi's T-shirt. Dianne Sison used a Rajo lacy top and mixed it with *maong* pants, and so did Sarah. Another one wore a denim jacket and paired it with a white tee and long Rajo skirt—proving the range and flexibility of his couture creations. Ana Kalaw of Preview, looking at some of the clothes that were worn by the models, asked, "Are these the same clothes from the show?"

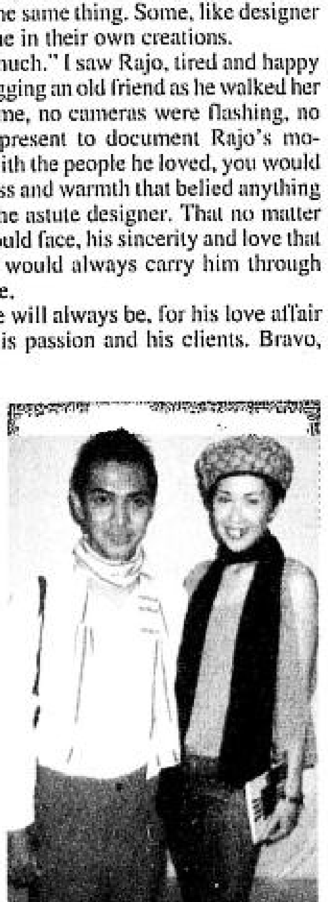
For men, I wore his navy blue geometric printed jacket of vintage fabric and tied it up with white Benetton pants to match his runway to reality focus for the night. Other guests who braved the weekend holiday traffic did the same thing. Some, like designer Tippi Ocampo, came in their own creations.

"Thank you so much." I saw Rajo, tired and happy at the same time, hugging an old friend as he walked her to the door. This time, no cameras were flashing, no photographer was present to document Rajo's moment. Seeing him with the people he loved, you would sense his truthfulness and warmth that belied anything spoken ill against the astute designer. That no matter what obstacle he would face, his sincerity and love that he has so much of would always carry him through victory or otherwise.

Great friends we will always be, for his love affair is with his work, his passion and his clients. Bravo, Rajo!

INSPIRED wearables for day and night by Rajo Laurel


IN LIVING COLOR. Astrud and Norman Crisologo


SCARVES UP! Michael Salientes and Teresa Herrera exude élan.

Robinsons Choice

Robinsons Choice
Robinsons Choice

Olympic Heights
Robinsons Choice
ORCHARD ROAD
CENTRAL PARKING AREA
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